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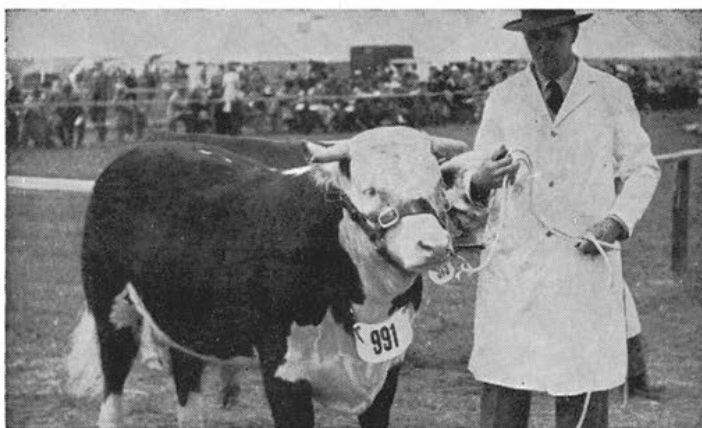
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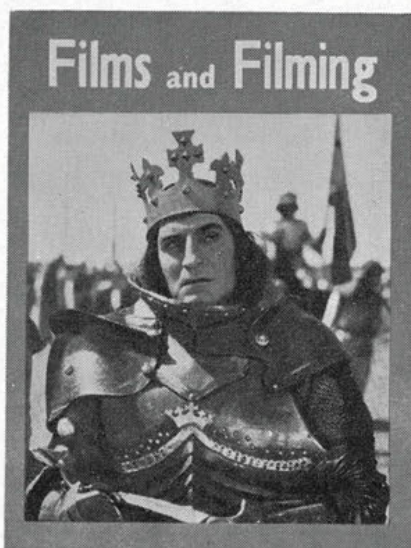
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A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films considered likely to be of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two or three stars.

AS LONG AS THEY'RE HAPPY (G.F.D.) A harassed father and his domestic complications, caused by unruly wife and daughters; adapted from the Vernon Sylvaire farce. Old chestnuts good-naturedly brought out. (Jack Buchanan, Jean Carson, Brenda de Banzie; director, J. Lee-Thompson. Eastman Colour.)

***BAD DAY AT BLACK ROCK** (M-G-M) A stranger comes to a derelict desert town and uncovers a mystery in which most of the inhabitants are concerned; pretentious and basically implausible melodrama, partly redeemed by highly skilled performances all round. (Spencer Tracy, Robert Ryan, Anne Francis; director, John Sturges. CinemaScope and Eastman Colour.)

BLACK WIDOW (Fox) Murder mystery in which a Broadway producer is suspected of strangling a girl he had befriended; a moderately ingenious but disagreeable story, tamely developed. (Ginger Rogers, Van Heflin, Gene Tierney; director, Nunnally Johnson. CinemaScope and De Luxe colour.)

****CHILDREN OF HIROSHIMA** (Contemporary) Sober, carefully documented but rather prosaic Japanese film about the effects of the atom bomb on that city. The subject, though, retains its terrible urgency. *Reviewed.* (Director, Kaneto Shindo.)

***COUNTRY GIRL, THE** (Paramount) Adaptation of Clifford Odets' play about an alcoholic actor who tries to blame his failures on his wife; flatly though conscientiously made, with the two leading players a little out of their depth. (Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly, William Holden; director, George Seaton.)

***DEEP IN MY HEART** (M-G-M) Musical extravaganza based on the life of Sigmund Romberg, with (mostly) gay 20's reconstructions, the famous numbers, and a studious but often witty impersonation by Jose Ferrer. (Merle Oberon, Helen Traubel, Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse; director, Stanley Donen. Metroscope and Eastman Colour.)

DESIREE (Fox) Napoleon and the silk-merchant's daughter; a CinemaScoped best-seller which laboriously inflates a minor romantic adventure. Unimpressive trappings and an interesting performance by Marlon Brando. (Jean Simmons, Michael Rennie; director, Henry Koster. Colour: DeLuxe.)

DESTINEES (Love, Soldiers and Women) (Miracle) Three women and War: Michèle Morgan (Joan of Arc), Claudette Colbert (a modern war widow) and Martine Carol (Lysistrata) in an unlucky Franco-Italian dip. (Directors, Jean Delannoy, Marcel Pagliero, Christian-Jaque.)

***END OF THE AFFAIR, THE** (Columbia) Grahame Greene's story of guilt-ridden lovers who grapple with problems of sin and personal faith. Neither adaptation, direction nor players quite get to the heart of the matter. *Reviewed.* (Van Johnson, Deborah Kerr, John Mills; director, Edward Dmytryk.)

GREEN FIRE (M-G-M) Standard CinemaScope adventure story, set in Colombia, and involving a rugged mining engineer, an elegant coffee planter and a number of disasters, natural and otherwise. (Stewart Granger, Grace Kelly; director, Andrew Marton. Eastman Colour.)

***HANSEL AND GRETEL** (R.K.O.) Straight adaptation by Padraic Colum of the Humperdinck operetta, interpreted by puppets operated by electronic controls. Animation excellent; design without distinction. (Producer, Michael Myerberg; director, John Paul. Technicolor.)

***LAST BRIDGE, THE** (Gala-Cameo-Poly) Austro-Yugoslav film with Maria Schell as a very serious-minded German doctor kidnapped by Yugoslavs during the war and forced to tend their wounded: high-toned dramatic tract. (Carl Mohnert; director, Helmut Kautner.)

LAST TIME I SAW PARIS, THE (M-G-M) Tear-jerking account of a war correspondent's marriage to an Ameri-

can girl, their would-be gay life in Paris, her death. A travesty of Scott Fitzgerald's *Babylon Revisited*. (Elizabeth Taylor, Van Johnson, Walter Pidgeon; director, Richard Brooks. Technicolor.)

LUCRETIA BORGIA (United Artists) Extravagantly otiose costume piece with Martine Carol as an 'innocent' but inexpressive Lucretia, and saucy tidbits excised for British audiences. (Pedro Armendariz; director, Christian-Jaque. Technicolor, dubbed.)

***OVERCOAT, THE** (Curzon) Free adaptation of Gogol's story by Alberto Lattuada: intelligent and handsomely mounted, but rather dry. (Renato Rascel, Yvonne Sanson.)

PENSIONNAIRE, LA (Gala) Consternation in a high-class Italian riviera hotel when one of the guests turns out to be a prostitute. Lethargic comedy-drama. (Martine Carol, Raf Vallone; director, Alberto Lattuada. Ferranicolor.)

PRIZE OF GOLD, A (Columbia) Sgt. Richard Widmark tries to steal gold bullion to help loved one Mai Zetterling take some German orphans to South America. Violent and corrupt Anglo-American thriller with Technicolor and Berlin locations. (Nigel Patrick, Donald Wolfelt; director, Mark Robson.)

*****SEVEN SAMURAI** (Films de France) Kurosawa's latest film tells of a village in 16th century Japan saved from bandits by a group of warriors. Visually superb, grippingly action-packed, occasionally too brilliant. *Reviewed.* (Toshiro Mifune, Takashi Shimura.)

*****STAR IS BORN, A** (Warners) Judy Garland's comeback film: a wonderfully enjoyable remake, with songs, of the old picture about the rise of one star and the fall of another. *Reviewed.* (James Mason, Jack Carson; director, George Cukor. CinemaScope and Technicolor.)

THAT LADY (Fox) Olivia de Havilland as the one-eyed Ana de Mendoza in a sluggish adaptation of Kate O'Brien's novel. Arresting performance by Paul Scofield as Philip II. (Gilbert Roland; director, Terence Young. CinemaScope and Eastman Colour.)

***THIS IS CINERAMA** (Cinerama Productions) The biggest of all the big screens: and, as a stunt, undoubtedly the best. Plenty of elaborate gimmicks, a few indifferent items, and a highly impressive airplane tour of the U.S.A. (Producers, Lowell Thomas and Merian C. Cooper. Print by Technicolor.)

***UNCHAINED** (Warners) Independently made, location-shot film about America's first prison without bars, with a number of journalistic clichés but a distinct and often telling sincerity of purpose. (Elroy Hirsch, Barbara Hale, Chester Morris; director, Hall Barlett.)

***UNDERWATER** (R.K.O.) Conventional but high-spirited ocean-bed adventures, searching for sunken treasure. Excellent SuperScopic underwater photography and set construction, friendly atmosphere established by stars. (Jane Russell, Gilbert Roland, Richard Egan; director, John Sturges. Technicolor.)

UNMARRIED MOTHERS (Adelphi) Life in a Swedish home for young unmarried mothers, with the usual veneer of social purpose and pretty photography. The *smorgasbord* as before. (Bengt Logardt, Eva Stiberg; directors, Bengt Logardt and Hans Dahlin.)

***VERA CRUZ** (United Artists) Two tough gold-hunters in Maximilian's Mexico: lion-hearted swashbuckler with engaging stars, and Denise Darcel as a treacherous but nubile Emperor's favourite. (Gary Cooper, Burt Lancaster; director, Robert Aldrich. SuperScope and Technicolor.)

YOUNG AT HEART (Warners) A remake, with songs and a different ending, of *Four Daughters*: cosy, treacly. (Doris Day, Frank Sinatra, Ethel Barrymore; director, Gordon Douglas. WarnerColor.)

SIGHT AND SOUND

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from *Prince of Players*.

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THE FRONT PAGE

APPLICATIONS are invited from young men of good education who wish to become TELEVISION CAMERAMEN.

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Coincidental but appropriate that these two advertisements should have appeared on the same day in *The Times*; and, a few days later, an epilogue was provided by the announcement that employment by British feature film companies during 1954 had dropped to nearly the lowest figure yet recorded. But this figure (3,525) did not, of course, include any of those employed by the various units formed, and still growing, to produce films for commercial television.

The American cinema's answer to the competitive threat of television was larger screens and an increase in the number of soundtracks; these have undoubtedly revived the box-office, but how permanently still remains to be seen. The British cinema, with the same threat not equally materialised, was rightly more cautious in this respect, and though one-fifth of our cinemas are now equipped for CinemaScope, production in this process has been so far limited to a few films (like *Knights of the Round Table*, *That Lady* and *The Deep Blue Sea*) with American capital involved. The Rank Organisation favours the more flexible and less "revolutionary" system of VistaVision.

One might, then, have hoped that the British industry believed that any move to counter the growing appeal of television must stem from the source, from the quality and nature of production itself. Alas: what is officially described as a "considerable modification" in the output of Group Three (which is henceforth to engage in only very occasional production, without the continuity essential to a positive overall policy) is a serious blow to this hope. The true reasons behind the failure of Group Three are probably known only to a limited number of people; it was only too apparent that the industry as a whole never accorded the scheme the sort of confident support that

alone could have ensured its success. The distressing fact that emerges, however, is simply that there is now no recognised point of entry into the film industry for creative talent.

To any observer with only a modicum of common-sense it must be clear that an industry which fails to train the only people who can provide it with its essential raw materials is either disastrously short-sighted or else notably lacking in confidence in the future.

This is not to say that nothing has happened for the good in the last year, which has seen in various quarters a consolidation of economic stability. While the main exception was, of course, the reorganisation of British Lion, the industry as a whole—thanks to continued Government subvention in the form of the Eady Fund and the N.F.F.C.—is in better financial health than for some time. The Rank Organisation's balance sheet for 1954 showed a profit of £837,000, more than twice as much as for 1953, and in heartening contrast to the doldrums of 1950, when its loss was something over £2,000,000. And this increased stability is reflected in a number of projects that compare favourably in enterprise and promise with those of twelve months ago.

These projects, though, are undertaken by established people, and nothing has radically changed to encourage the newcomer, to strengthen our cinema with that essential infusion of young talent. The result is that commercial television has not only the appeal of novelty; it seems to offer chances of the kind of creative activity that films at present deny the young enthusiast. Last year our cinema admitted 37 apprentices or trainees, a number that commercial television can at present absorb in a month. While the cinema, in fact, installs new screens and advertises for trainee house managers, television signs up producers, writers, directors and actors, and advertises for new technicians. Out of twenty-eight resolutions submitted at the A.C.T. annual general meeting in March, several were understandably concerned to establish a British quota for television screens and the payment of standard rates to technicians working in television films, but not one was related to the problem of creating more favourable conditions for the intake and development of fresh talent within the industry proper.

Meanwhile, into the editorial offices of this magazine—and, one knows, of most film organisations—come the young visitors (or letters from them) whose burden has been the same for the last few years. "I am interested in films, I want to work in films, I've tried . . . (Here follows a catalogue of applications frustrated or rejected.) What do you advise?" And still, pointing out the futilities of illusion, one outlines the difficulties, the hazards of an uncertain period. But now one adds: "Of course, you could try TV. After all, they do advertise. . . ."

Opposite: Hollywood today. . . . Side by side the CinemaScope and widescreen cameras are trained on Sean McClory and Stewart Granger in "Moonfleet," from the J. Meade Faulkner smuggling story. Directing operations is Fritz Lang; watchers include George Sanders (left of cameras), Viveca Lindfors and Joan Greenwood, and behind them, producer John Houseman.



"DOWN A LONG WAY"

"DOWN A LONG WAY" is a 20-minute coloured cartoon film showing why an oil well is sited in a particular spot and how the well is drilled.

The hit or miss system of siting wells in the early days is compared with modern scientific methods, and geological and geophysical operations are shown.

"DOWN A LONG WAY" follows on the earlier film "AS OLD AS THE HILLS" which shows how the oil was formed and trapped deep in the earth.

a wide distribution in many countries. They also include films of special interest to universities, schools, business and training colleges and scientific societies. Each is available in both 35 mm. and 16 mm. sizes. One of these films is described briefly here, and details of the others in the series can be obtained from the Petroleum Films Bureau from whom all 16 mm. films and selected 35 mm. films may be obtained free of charge.★

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In the Picture

"I AM A CAMERA"

ARTHUR NORRIS writes: After a somewhat threadbare year, it is good to see the British cinema stirring with a number of more original projects: Olivier's *Richard III*; Carol Reed's *A Kid for Two Farthings*; David Lean's *Summertime* (in Italy); and Thorold Dickinson's *The Hill* (in Israel). Not the least intriguing amongst these is a version of Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*—adapted from the popular play which John van Druten concocted from these stories under the title of *I Am a Camera*. This Remus production has employed an extraordinary variety of talent. At the least, one feels, a highly individual picture can hardly fail to result from an adaptation by John Collier (that brilliant English fantasist who has too long been squandering his gift in Hollywood); from direction by Henry Cornelius (whose *Genevieve* is still breaking records all over the world); from lighting by Guy Green (*Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *Rob Roy*); and from a cast headed by players as diversely endowed as Julie Harris (*Sally Bowles*), Laurence Harvey (*Christopher Isherwood*), and Shelley Winters (*Natalia*).

Cornelius is quite aware that he is leading this distinguished team across a tight-rope. Isherwood, after all, is hardly a figure likely to stimulate in popular audiences the self-identification desirable in the hero of an ambitious film. Even after concessions have been made to render Herr Issyvoov more congenial (funnier, charming in a more familiar manner) to at least a middle-brow public—one is still left with a hero who remains obstinately detached, "quite passive, recording, not thinking." And what of the somewhat specialised background of Berlin in the early 'thirties? And Sally Bowles herself?

Against all these doubts, Cornelius is banking heavily on what he calls the *Sunset Boulevard* theory. Support from the relatively sophisticated urban audiences of the world can justify a picture financially, even if the vast popular box-office remains unresponsive. And certainly he is showing his faith in this desirable theory in the sincerest possible way; for after *I Am a Camera* he plans a venture perhaps equally sophisticated in its appeal. Continuing his collaboration with John Collier, Cornelius will make a "portmanteau" film based on three of the ironic fantasies in Collier's collection, *Presenting Moonshine*. Cornelius smiles: "I've got to do something with all that money that keeps pouring in from *Genevieve*." If only all such successes proved so fertile. . . .



Laurence Harvey (*Christopher Isherwood*) and Julie Harris (*Sally Bowles*).

ITALIAN NOTES

ROBERT HAWKINS writes: A general slowdown in production activity, due to the unclear future of the protective Italian film legislation, has characterised the early part of the year in studios here, and little of note has been made so far.

Three directors are using the interim for theatre work while their most recent films go into release: Castellani, his *Romeo and Juliet* getting a so-so Italian reception, Visconti, whose *Senso* is faring very well, and Rossellini, whose *Journey to Italy*, *Joan at the Stake* and *Fear* have proved both financial and artistic disappointments—if the word is still applicable to the author of *Open City* and *Paisa*. His theatrical activity, incidentally, is "The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian" with Isa Miranda.

The ever-present de Sica is in another extended acting phase, sandwiched in between his own *Oro di Napoli*—a delightful sketchbook on that colourful city, and a partial return to form after *Terminal Station*—and a project with Zavattini, *Il Tetto*, with actors-from-life. One of his more amusing bits is in a recent Blasetti comedy, *Peccato Che Sia Una Canaglia*, in which he lightly sketches an ageing gentleman thief. Currently he is down to appear with Linda Darnell in a dubious item directed by Giuseppe Amato and titled *The Last Five Minutes*, and later this spring has signed to star in *Ferdinando*, a Neapolitan *Kermesse Heroique*, which Mario Soldati will direct.

Three products of the postwar documentary school have recently completed feature films. *Le Amiche* (*The Friends*) is the title of Michelangelo Antonioni's latest, in which he again applies his glacial style to the foibles of middle- and upper-class Italian society, from an interesting script by Suso Cecchi D'Amico and Alba de Cespedes. Eleonora Rossi Drago, Valentina Cortese and Yvonne Furneaux are three of the "friends." Dino Risi (who directed the dance-hall bit in *Amore in Citta*) has made *Il Segno de Venere* as his third feature, from his own script, in which Sophia Loren, Franca Valeri, de Sica, Raf Vallone, Peppino de Filippo and Alberto Sordi act out a semi-serious tale of two girl friends with opposite complexes: one (Loren) that she is over-attractive and will never find a disinterested, lasting husband, the other (Valeri) that she is unable to attract. (Her encounter with de Sica, as a raggy poet with a suicide fixation which he never takes too seriously, should prove a highlight.) Finally, Francesco Maselli, whose feature debut at 23 is worth noting, and who has a distinguished string of shorts and an episode of *Amore in Citta* behind him already, has made *Fine d'Estate* on a shoestring budget with a troupe almost as young as himself. Lucia Bose, Jean-Pierre Mocky and other lesser-knowns are in the film, which deals with the war-speeded growth to manhood of a group of youths, refugees from bombing raids on a big city, living in a small north Italian town.

Valentina Cortese in Antonioni's "Le Amiche"



Simone Signoret and Vera Clouzot in "Les Diaboliques".

FRENCH NOTES

GENE MOSKOWITZ writes: A mystery, even greater than that involved in H. G. Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques*, is the fact that the Louis Delluc prize, supposedly set up to crown the most creative use of cinema, was awarded to the film even before its premiere. Its opening filled in another aspect of the mystery, as the critics backed up their judgments in wildly overstated "raves." *Les Diaboliques* is now on its way to becoming one of the most successful films of the year, and the term "masterpiece" has been widely used. There were some less favourable notices which made the point that intrinsically the film said nothing, but then backtracked and admitted its perfection of style and technique.

Actually the film possesses no such thing. It is grim; it has some queasy moments, but relentless sordidness means nothing without the support of a point of view, and this Clouzot apparently lacks. He sets out to make the great film of suspense; but the suspense comes rarely, and the denouement reminds one of ancient "creaking door" melodrama. It would be unfair to give away the rather startling final twist, but it can be said that the preliminaries lack a clear spacing and style, and none of the characters is given the necessary development and relief. *Les Diaboliques* is well made, but deficient in the undercurrents of real terror at which it aims—especially in comparison with *Greed*, with which it has something in common.

More deserving of the Delluc award would have been Abel Gance's first film for twelve years, *La Tour de Nesle*. This great pioneer shows that he has lost none of his feel for cinema, and none of his

When the dead awaken: Caj Kristiansen (Anders), Birgitte Federspiel (Inger) and 81 year-old Henrik Malberg (her father-in-law) in Dreyer's "The Word".

creative flamboyance. He has recreated the middle ages with sure feeling, and his truculence, Rabelaisian dashes and gothic melodrama are all blended with a firm hand into a brilliant fresco of lusty, virile days.

The first original script by François Mauriac, *Le Pain Vivant*, made by a young director, Jean Mousselle, has now been shown; and Mauriac has expressed some scepticism as to the interpretation of his scenario. It is a pretentious tract, trying to symbolise the Communion in the life of a dedicated Catholic girl who makes herself the victim and sacrifice of her bitter, overbearing father and her delinquent brother. The director has tried to be too faithful to it, and the result is arty, didactically slow, unreal and

rather dull.

Some of the best French directors are now at work again; René Clair will start shooting *Les Grandes Manoeuvres* in June, and René Clément, *L'Hussard sur le Toit*, from Jean Giono's novel. Carné has begun *Les Bâtisseurs*, a drama about dam-building. Max Ophüls his first colour film, *Lola Montès*, with Martine Carol, Peter Ustinov and Orson Welles. And one American director has an interesting project: Preston Sturges, who is to make a comedy from the Pierre Daninos novel, *Les Carnets de Major Thompson*, with Alec Guinness, Danielle Darrieux and Robert Lamoureux.

"THE WORD"

EBBE NEERGAARD writes: In 1932, when Carl Dreyer had just finished *Vampyr*, he went to the first performance of *The Word*, a challenging modern miracle play by the Danish playwright Kaj Munk, murdered by the Germans in 1944, during the Occupation. Dreyer wanted then and there to make a film out of this weird and controversial material, but the time (and especially the Danish feature film industry) was not ripe. As usual, he had to wait. On January 10th this year Dreyer was at last able to show his film of *The Word*, in his own cinema in Copenhagen, Dagmar Teatret, for which the Danish Government gave him a licence three years ago. It is nice to be able to say that in another way the Danish Government has helped him also; five years ago, when Dreyer was very poor and working on his project for a film about Christ, a Government fund gave him some money to make a script from *The Word*—the only theme outside the Gospels that interested him. The result may be considered as a preliminary study for *Christ*.

For the first time in his 66 years, Dreyer has experienced what is called a "smash hit." Not only did all the critics bring out all the big words, in contrast to their reception of *Day of*





Anna Magnani and Burt Lancaster in "The Rose Tattoo," directed by Daniel Mann from the Tennessee Williams play.

Wrath, but this time the audiences were there, too. You can see queues at two o'clock in the afternoon, and the film is showing to full houses all over Denmark.

Dreyer's first popular success: what is it? It may be something specifically Danish—time will show when the film is presented abroad. The people we meet in the film are very Danish, even in the midst of tragedy they never use big words, and they have, if not humour, then a great deal of irony. But haven't farmers that same reaction everywhere? It may be the Sensation; that a woman, dead in her coffin, is awakened by a young man who has just been cured of an insanity during which he believed himself to be Christ. But that scene is only the last five minutes of the film.

What counts, I think, both for believers and agnostics, is the reality of the people in the film. Munk's play has an extremely clear-cut dramatic plot, rich in well prepared surprises, in irony, and in characterisations directly presented in a style not far from caricature. The Swedish film of *The Word*, ten years ago, was no more than conventional, and what was effective in it was due solely to Munk's play. Dreyer's *The Word* shocks only because you come to know its ten people so intimately. Again he has used the close-up as a master, and again you have this feeling of a force behind the camera that compels you to the bitter end, into the hearts and minds of the characters. But he doesn't cut as in *Jeanne d'Arc*—he has developed the technique of *Day of Wrath*; briefly, there are a number of takes lasting eight minutes, which he wanted to make even longer but could not because the 81-year-old actor couldn't remember so many lines. The camera almost insinuates itself among the characters, always in

Ann Miller and Art Mendes in a number from a new musical choreographed by Hermes Pan, "Hit the Deck".

motion, but slowly, almost diffidently, with that monomaniac diffidence that is Dreyer.

The younger players grew fanatic during the shooting, as usual when working with Dreyer. The girl who plays the leading female part, the woman who dies after a miscarriage, was herself pregnant; and she begged Dreyer to come to the hospital and bring a tape recorder with him to record her groans during delivery, because she wanted the sounds to be used in the film. And they were. . . .

Dreyer's reaction to success? The strange thing is, he enjoyed it even before it happened. A week before the premiere we spent an evening together; he was young, gay, happy, modest as usual, and eminently sure of himself in his diffident way. I have never seen him happier. He couldn't know if other people were going to like what he had made, but he had the feeling of having succeeded in doing what he'd wanted to do. *The Word*, I think, is one of his most personal films.

SOVIET NOTES

Some interesting information on current Soviet production is supplied in an article published by the *Anglo-Soviet Journal* (Winter 1954-55), in which the director GRIGORI ALEXANDROV writes: Documentary films have recently made a stride forward. Several films have been produced depicting the labour of workers and peasants truthfully and lovingly.

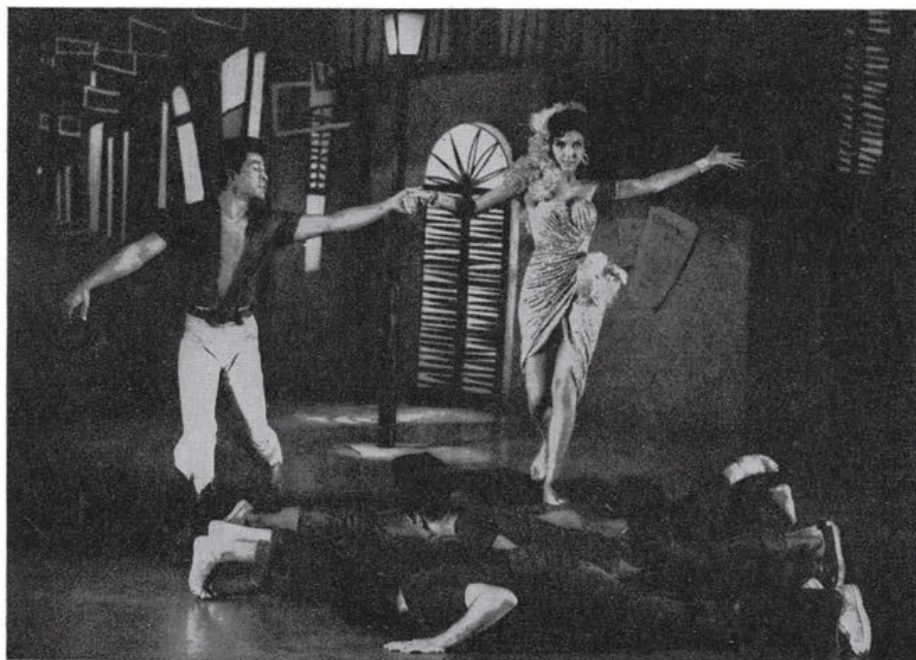
As regards full-length feature films on the life and work of the Soviet working-class, however, matters are wholly unsatisfactory. One can virtually name only two films on the subject in the last few years—*Donbas Miners* (1951) and *Pattern for Life* (1952). The time-lag in this branch of the cinema indicates the gap that exists in the work of our directors, scriptwriters and novelists. We have all too few important works of fiction on the working class and working intellectuals of the U.S.S.R.

Among the films planned by the

Ministry of Culture for 1954-55 there are to be several on the life and work of Soviet workers. Such are *The Great Family* (based on Kochetov's *The Zhurbins*), which is about shipbuilding workers; a comedy entitled *Stars*, which ridicules complacency, the end-of-the-month rush to fulfil the plan, and the unbusinesslike lack of organisation at a pit-head; *Donbas* (based on Gorbato's novel of the same title); *Broad Stream* (based on Andreyev's novel), which is on the younger generation of workers; and a film on oil workers. Many films are to be on the everyday life of workers at machine and tractor stations, on State farms and on collective farms. Nearing completion are *Combine-Workers*; *Over the Cheremosh*, which is on the beginning of the development of collective-farm organisation in the Ukraine; *Saltanat*, which is about Kirghiz cattle breeders; *Warrior Girl*, a musical comedy about young Kazakh farmers; *Achievement*, on Georgian sheepbreeders; *Encounter*, on Azerbaidzhan cotton farms; *Notes of an Agronomist*, a story of village life; *Collective-Farm Producer*, about the blossoming of the talents of the people.

Every worker, collective farmer and office worker, should be able to see a new feature film once or twice a week at least. This means raising the 1956 output to between seventy and eighty films. To achieve this, the building of a large new Moscow studio is already under way, and the studios in Leningrad and Alma-Ata are being enlarged. New studios are being built in Riga, Tashkent and Baku, the building of a new studio is shortly to begin in Minsk, and several other Republic capitals are to have studios built.

A mere increase in quality is not the point, however. It is our duty to make interesting and truthful films of genuine social content and high artistic level. Defects in cultural and educational work reflect immediately and directly on the development of industry, transport and agriculture.





DEREK PROUSE

notes on Film Acting

Above: Jean Marais as Michel, Yvonne de Bray as Yvonne in Cocteau's "Les Parents Terribles".

Right: Marlon Brando as Stanley Kowalski in "A Streetcar Named Desire".

IN realising his total vision of a film, the director's most inaccessible contributor is the actor. The actor is, potentially, the strongest threat to that uniformity of method whereby, in his own imaginative response to the material, the director may most perfectly reveal himself a stylist. The task of imposing a common interpretative method on a cast sharing, more often than not, no definable aims or affinities, is a formidable one. With no precise theoretical language in common through which to convey his ideas to the actors, the director can easily find himself in a semantic deadlock, and simple words like "sincerity," "style," "pace" can turn into confusing hydras. And with different acting styles within a single work, false emphases become unavoidable; rhythm and form are vitally affected. In considering some widely different films which most successfully attained a stylistic unity of interpretation, one may begin to see what conditions are essential to this unity, what individual refinements of acting it permits, and to what extent general excellence of performance is possible without it.

II

The creation of a style to depict his "*société à la dérive*" was almost impeccably achieved by Cocteau and his cast in *Les Parents Terribles*. It is significant that the least successful player in this underpraised and masterly film (Josette Day) was the only one who did not appear in the stage production. The economical power of the playing by the others could only result from long study of the roles in the theatre, or from rehearsal conditions exceptional in the cinema.

It is a tribute to the close truth of Cocteau's observation, and his actors' embodiment of it, that the final truth of the characterisations in *Les Parents Terribles* can extend to behaviour that definitely fringes the bizarre. (Yvonne screams for the police when she learns that her son is in love. Even when calm, her lack of self-discipline allows her to toss a lighted match into her apartment's inflammable squalor.) The film compiles its observation of family life by many slight but revealing personal details; long-standing habits are incorporated into the action, and executed with the tactful essential stresses that alone could create a total character. (The ill-fitting door is constantly closed by Léo but never repaired, and the action symbolises her satisfaction in the power she wields over the apartment's order.) A wrongful emphasis in the presentation of behaviour such as this could easily result in a sterile idiosyncrasy; and, from the start, a precisely defined existence in an extraordinary situation is demanded of the actors. The exact weight of experience needs to be felt behind each gesture. Consider the opening events—Yvonne nearly kills herself with an insulin overdose; Michel has stayed out for the night; the atmosphere is charged. In the scenes that follow, the immediate situation is developed and, at the same time, revelation of background is made with abnormal prodigality.

Léo: (Je suis) une maniaque d'ordre comme vous êtes des maniaques de désordre. Tu sais fort bien pourquoi notre oncle m'a légué sa très petite fortune. Il sous-entendait que je vous ferais vivre.

Very soon, the comfortable patterns of reference to which people reduce each other through long proximity are shattered, and reassessments forced.

Léo: Qu'est-ce que tu crois donc que je fais dans cette maison depuis vingt-trois ans? Pauvre aveugle . . . pauvre sourde. Je souffre. J'ai aimé Georges, et je l'aime,

et je l'aimerais sans doute jusqu'à la mort. . . . Que suis-je depuis vingt ans? Je te le demande? Une bonne!

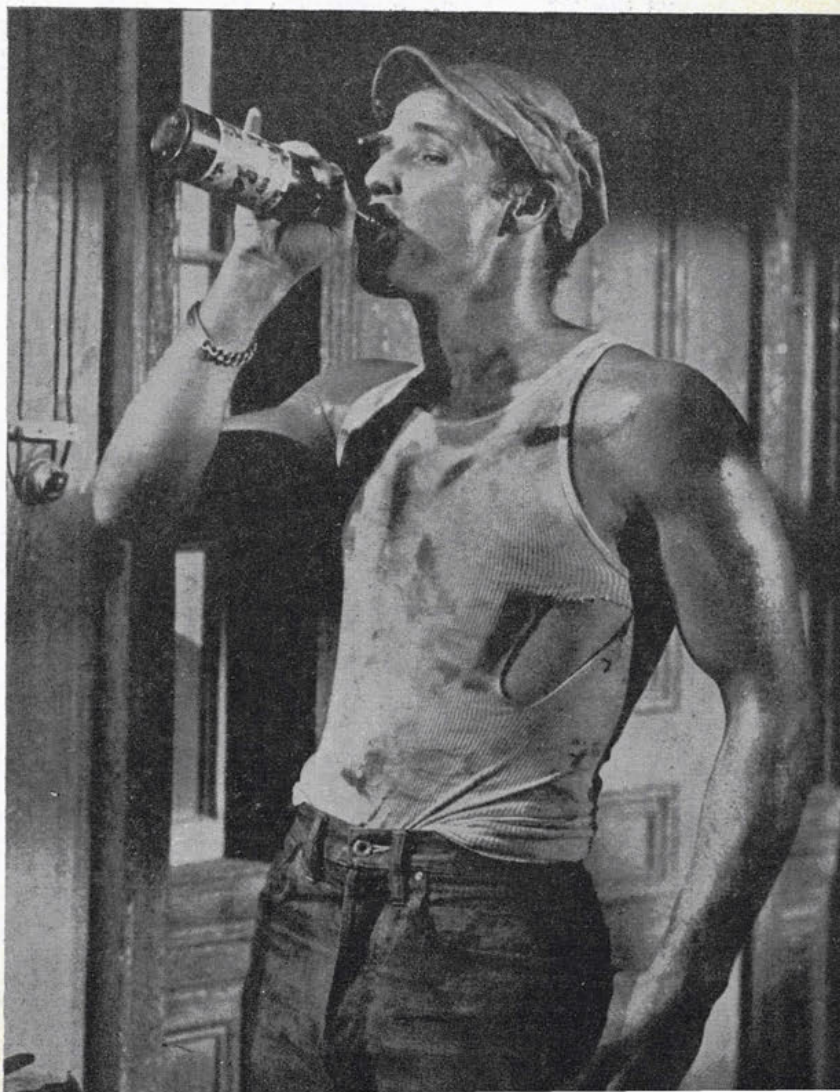
Yvonne: Léo, tu me hais.

Léo: Non, je t'ai haïe. . . .

Interpretatively, this sets a tone as defined and as hazardous as a tightrope; but the actors have grasped it accurately, and all possible misinterpretations from farce to melodrama are eluded.

When the action moves to the girl's studio, the unbroken subtext of character revelation is not sustained by Josette Day. She cannot press the personal style of the text into the service of a more intense exposition; she plays more naturalistically, and in doing so discards the overtones so admirably incorporated by the others. The result is a performance, unaffected, careful, never false, but never right with the exposed precision of the rest. This comparative failure is of the least obtrusive kind, but it affects the middle sequences of the film. The other actors' success creates, for the claustrophobic "*roulotte*," a complete atmospheric texture—to such an extent that lives, settings, relationships, are all inseparable parts of this texture; but the intended contrast of the studio's "order" is not conveyed to the same living degree.

A similar problem faced William Wyler in his film of Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*; and again, he largely achieved the power of unity. It is interesting to note that Dan Duryea and Patricia Collinge, repeating their stage performances for the screen, were brilliant as never again afterwards. And Bette Davis, an actress whose abundant talent can extend to self-parody with no guiding hand to stay it, attained in these settings of unusual integrity an authority and discretion she has never



equalled. As in *Les Parents Terribles*, the truth that each actor created could refer, to maintain itself, to the surrounding truth of others; and once more a living atmosphere was conveyed—an air of arrogant good living, a chilly cleanliness. The difference lay in the relationships to be exposed, for *The Little Foxes* deals not so much in the subtle, mutually affecting interplay of character as in patterns of settled rejection. The characters were more clearly divided into “bad” and “good.” In the case of the “bad” people (Regina, her brothers, her nephew), normal needs had been sublimated to serve ambition and greed. Regina and her brothers, retreating to private worlds, looked out from them only to fear, to suspect; and even then, their arrogant indifference to each other’s feelings permitted them to manifest suspicions openly. There was little need for more oblique behaviour. And in preferring to live alone, the “bad” people forced the “good” to do the same. Among them, Horace, for years estranged from his wife, had the withdrawn eye of a permanent invalid, and the oppressed Birdie, encouraged by drink to communicate her dream world of the past, would seldom find a receptive ear. The “good” were held in fixed contempt by the “bad,” and the “bad” had affected the “good” once and for all, long ago, and set the changeless pattern. In this way, the unbroken life of each character depended only in a more specialised, narrow sense on the surrounding situations and characters; but within these limits unity of interpretation contributed to a strongly dramatic film.

A more normal interdependence marked the life of the community created by John Huston in *The Asphalt Jungle*. So utterly different from the usual criminal world was this film that, at the end, it was a shock to realise that the entire community had been, in all its created social levels, outside the law: a criminal world in which

all actions were not pathologically dictated, where cats were defended and children worried about, yet where the round of crime and the need to outwit the police were the fabric of life itself, seldom questioned or argued about. Here was no over-simplified life on the wrong side of the tracks. Talents, luck and education still governed status in the community, but in more urgently dictated degree. Life left no margin for error. The character played by Sterling Hayden is the only one who has not accepted this world, and the dominant obsession in his case is to get back to his farm in the South. (The doctor’s flight to Mexico is merely a professional retirement.) The actor’s conception of the character remains a good general one, and he creates a believable physical presence; but, in contrast to Sam Jaffe, Louis Calhern, James Whitmore, Jean Hagen and the others, whose very gestures, inflexions and mannerisms succeed in conveying a temperament, an attitude, his behaviour throughout is not sufficiently informed by this *idée fixe*. It does not condition his degree of involvement in the situations. This lapse seriously affects the form of the film, for the final reckless drive to the farm assumes a false importance; whereas Sam Jaffe has finely prepared us for the doctor’s pedantic sexual preoccupation with the jitterbugging girl in the roadside café, which causes him to delay and be overtaken by the police. This is a suddenly exposed nerve of character that seems absolutely truthful and right.

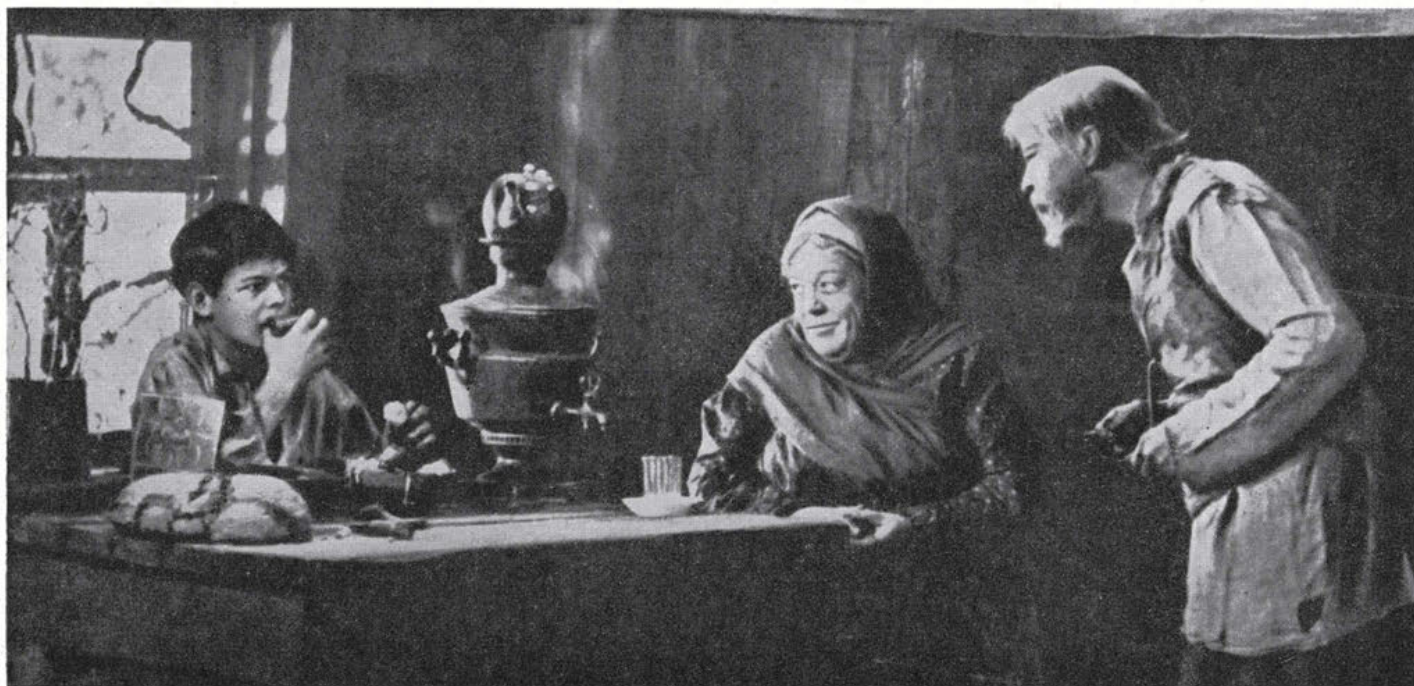
III

Les Parents Terribles, *The Little Foxes* and *The Asphalt Jungle* are to some extent special cases, since each is a tightly constructed study of an enclosed, interlocked community. The power wielded by a cast united in method in *The Childhood of Maxim Gorki*, a film which spreads and overflows, slowly and widely, on a far greater variety of levels, is much more astonishing. Under Donskoi’s inspired direction, there is here no invitation to admire surface brilliance. Episodic and sometimes untidy as the film is, seldom does one surprise the unspecific look, or the gesture not totally involved in the situation. For much of the time the result is what Stanislavsky promised to those who steadily rejected “personality parading”—the attainment of inspiration, the creation of a rich inner life directing the actors along an infallible line of truth.

So effortlessly right in tone and stress is the film, so complete its rejection of stale, tried and trusted channels of interpretation, that tears and laughter give no warning. These achievements are so absolutely those defined by Stanislavsky in his famous method as the true aims of acting, that it seems probable that the mastery of this remarkable acting “language” owes much to him. Here again some extraordinary human behaviour is incorporated with a miraculous tact (the spontaneously singing and dancing apprentice). Here again the strong victimise the weak to a monstrous extent (an old workman becomes blind and is thrown out, the apprentice dies as a result of the uncle’s vile treatment). Completely triumphant in one of the greatest of film performances is Massalitinova as the grandmother who embodies the vibrant “yes” to life of the whole work. Her involvement in each situation, her



Agnes Moorehead in “*The Magnificent Ambersons*.”



Massalitinova in "The Childhood of Maxim Gorki".

essential "thereness," the clarity of her relationships with the others, all have the rightness of the only possible way. And it is precisely this ultimate perfection which is not attainable without a common unifying method. Massalitinova's eye can always encounter others, and she never risks losing her truth by meeting untruth among them. She is constantly changing, adjusting, being altered by the life around her. Always changing and always the same, her final truth could not exist without the truth of others.

IV

In the creation of all the worlds so far mentioned, the director has exacted of his players one essential condition: the abandonment of direct selling of personality in favour of a close identification with the role, and a truthful relation to the situation and to the other actors. The knowledge of what final values he intends has led the director to create the conditions wherein they could flourish; and, in explaining these values, he has to some extent indicated a common interpretative method.

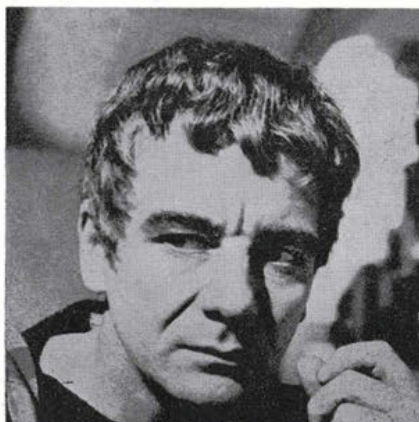
But when the director is incapable of, or uninterested in, effecting this explanation, actors by themselves generally reveal no integrating aims. Their efforts can be

divided into two main categories: actors who, in accepting the responsibilities of a role, are conditioned by how they may best present their own personalities, and actors who, to the best of their abilities under the circumstances, practise their different methods of truthful interpretation. An exceptional film comes to mind which reveals in great clarity the diversity within this second category and, as an example, is one of its most remarkable triumphs.

In *The Magnificent Ambersons* Orson Welles, while leaving his personal imprint on all other aspects of the film, failed to extend a unifying influence over the acting. But he created conditions of unusual freedom which encouraged some uninhibited practice of personal methods. Thus there are such varying performances as the sober naturalism of Joseph Cotten, the perky self-approving character work in the small part of the chemist, the tactful but conventionally "sincere" work of Dolores Costello, two minutes of vividly truthful identification from Emma Dunn as the outraged neighbour, and, of course, the phenomenon of the brilliant Agnes Moorehead. Possessor of the screen's most piercing eye, she has led the most daring raids on many types of American women, and knows how to arrange her loot to shattering effect.



Three notable stage-to-screen transitions. Left, Shirley Booth in "Come Back, Little Sheba", Centre, John Gielgud as Cassius in "Julius Caesar". Right, Katharine Hepburn in "The Philadelphia Story".





Herbert Marshall, Bette Davis, Charles Dingle in "The Little Foxes".

In the unusually favourable atmosphere of the *Ambersons* set, she brought her amazing personal style to perfection. This style is the opposite of the Stanislavskian method. Instead of complete submission to the role, it involves a constant quality of demonstration, of externalising; it discourages total empathy, and presents instead a deliberate commentary on the part being played. Agnes Moorehead has always done her best work when she has been allowed to develop this "endistancement" (similar to Brecht's *Verfremdung*). In deliberately choosing to interpret a particular moment in a particular way, she hopes to signpost the path to the total response she desires. Now, the final hysterical scene in *The Magnificent Ambersons* was rehearsed many times by Welles with different acting "objectives," in the hope of finally achieving a many-layered compound of them all. This perhaps explains why the scene, although undeniably a *tour de force*, does not represent the greatest triumph of the actress's method. But when Welles, finding the "strawberry shortcake" scene too short, allowed her to improvise a longer version, the result was the most impeccably acted scene in the film.*

V

In England and America, the acting business is ferociously competitive, the constant menace of unemployment very real.

*The Stanislavsky acting method is cast in the mode of destiny, of moving forward, as with life itself. Its complexity can only be realised by constant truthful observation of the circumstances of the role, paving a way to the stimulation of the subconscious, and the creation of a "soul" for the part. The spectator is invited to feel with this. The Brechtian method is cast in the mode of the past, the better to discourage empathy

These conditions favour the widespread indulgence in "personality" acting where there is no training method competent to expose its limitations. There is a crude power-feeling, a tight security, to be found in a concentration of self. A true relation to the situation, any "out-going" towards one's surroundings, may seem a weakening of the concentrated personality impact. When personal salesmanship is substituted for an acting method, the interpretative process is merely feigned. The discovery is never made that the greater the submission to the role, the greater the revelation of the actor in it. (Even some of the most talented performers never realise this. I believe that Bette Davis, for instance, prefers the results of *Jezebel* to those of *The Little Foxes*.)

The identification of success and the ability to "put oneself across" has long been made by America's great propaganda machine. Perfected in its presentation of great film personalities, the cinema has been prepotent in disseminating it. Thus many characteristics of bad acting are grafted on to the potential actor long before any real contact with the profession is made. (Equally, when a serious and gifted player is unwilling to comply with certain basic requirements of the "personality" manufacturers, the only alternatives are to return to the stage or to suffer neglect; the former happened with, for instance,

in the spectator. Instead, a discerning critical attitude is demanded of him, to judge the events he is witnessing. The actor's identification with the role is sought only in a certain rehearsal stage of its creation; in the final presentation his attitude is a detached, precise demonstration, offered for social and political judgment.

Henry Fonda and Betty Field, the latter in this country with Yvonne Mitchell.) But great film personalities are not, in fact, numerous; their material, anyway, is exploited to serve them, and the results can in no way offer a guide to interpretative acting. Though refined to the point where every glance and gesture serves the personal legend and current fashion, the professional life of the personality performer is usually short. Existing only in terms of self, there are no external references by which the accuracy of the formula may be checked and adapted. Fashions change, and so do people, and soon not even the internal gesture governing the formula is so immediately accessible. In this case the performer must resort to an imitation from memory. Rare in this category of players is a Dietrich with sufficient flair to adjust her particular nonsense to the tiny fashionable changes within the Zeitgeist.

Only in the unique instance of Garbo has a great personality evolved a style of acting which could consistently triumph over indifferent material and false surroundings. She defeated these by simply withdrawing to another world and acting there. In this private and meticulously imagined world her behaviour was, through her radiance, idealised. Even the folly of women she brushed with divinity. No man could equal her stature and she could not be said to play a scene with one. In *Camille*, she did not lose Robert Taylor's Armand, but Love. It was impossible to particularise, as it was absurd that a mere man should leave her. In *Queen Christina* she played her greatest scene with a room. She created her own genre of acting and was a law unto herself.

There is, of course, a vital distinction to be made between "personality performers" and actors who, through type-casting, constantly repeat the same type of role. While the former peddle a fashionable concocted image of self, the latter deal in a whole view of life which is, by temperament, easily accessible to them. In the theatre an actor may be called upon to repeat his role many hundreds of times. If the role is initially conceived along truthful lines, and if the actor's technique and imagination enable him to see the part freshly every night, the performance can be repeated continually. Moreover, such fertilising familiarity with the emotional territory of the role deepens to a complete understanding; the inner patterns of feelings, and their physical expression, become more and more accurately realised. Then, if the chance occurs to repeat this performance for the screen, the changed surroundings and manner of creation cannot destroy the kinesthetic memory of the interpretation. Some of the greatest screen performances have occurred after long acquaintance with the roles in the theatre. Some have already been mentioned; others include Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Shirley Booth in *Come Back, Little Sheba*, John Gielgud in *Julius Caesar*, Judy Holliday in *Born Yesterday*, Katharine Hepburn in *The Philadelphia Story*, and Ethel Waters in *Member of the Wedding*. The screen, most revealing medium of all for the actor, captured these performances in all their detail, demonstrating the complex structural truth of the wider effects visible in the theatre. But at other times it can be ruthless, and expose the ravages of a long theatre run where no technique of true re-creation has been employed to preserve the original freshness. Ethel Merman's boisterous high spirits once communicated gaiety. In *Call Me Madam*, a mechanical aggression could not animate the cold eye; lacking genuine gaiety, the sum total of the remaining elements came near to creating the opposite of the effect intended.

VI

Great successes in the commercial cinema, of course, strongly determine subsequent roles, and the greater the success the more rigid the type-casting. Moreover, conditions often bring it about that, even when the role offers the chance of a fresh creation, there are good reasons why this is not always accepted. In the cases of the two most recent stage players of outstanding talent to pursue a film career, the particular quality of their initial success diminishes their chances of beating the system. The "reality definitions" which inform the work of Marlon Brando and Judy Holliday have more in common than a first glance at their films might suggest. Both propound a doctrine that sincerity resides only in those dark inchoate depths of personality that most strenuously resist expression in words. Fluency is the very proof of insincerity; elegance or refinement

of manner, a sophisticated deceit. This, basically, is an infantile behaviour concept with a wide unconscious sanction in America, and it has been quick to engage sympathetic approval. But drama has to deal in words, and before any complete interpretation is possible, there is an appropriate "reality definition" to be mastered. This is as necessary to, say, *The Importance of Being Earnest* as it is to *On the Waterfront*. In the former, it is only by understanding the values that make up its reality that the exaggeration of them can be judged—and therein the whole comedy lies. But a "reality definition" which rates incoherence so highly as an expression of sincerity is not the most easily adaptable; and when this, through habit, becomes the most easily accessible one to an actor, then the actor is in danger of being very restricted indeed.

The atmosphere of most film studios offers little of that dedicated unity in which the actor may take a relaxing part. But many actors need this unity as a means to lowering the habitual social defences imposed by a tough profession. Denied it, the creative personality can concentrate into a narrow egotism. To combat this, and ensure his authoritative "grip" on the life of a new part, the actor will pass this part, wherever possible, through the familiar "reality definition" which he knows can be trusted. Brando's best work since *A Streetcar Named Desire* has been in *On the Waterfront*, where the material and his own working "reality definition" again perfectly coincided. But at other times his creative personality has not wholly submitted itself to the role. In *Viva Zapata*, character and interpretation could not always be made to serve each other; as a characterisation, his performance was incomplete. And in *Julius Caesar*, his only attempt at a fully articulated style, the performance, though powerful, was impossible as a character conception of Antony. Imaginatively this lay outside his talents—as though, intuitively, he could never approve of a figure possessing so many of the electric social qualities. For the actor's sympathies to function fully, Antony—the facile rhetorician, the lover of players, who "revels long o' nights"—had to be reduced to something more comfortably comprehensive: a sort of Odets good guy, suspicious of any elaborated social life, stung into avenging his pal with the simple sincerity of an animal. But Brando's stubborn fight for the best working conditions indicates a full awareness of his need for them. Judy Holliday, more securely contracted to a single studio, has so far continued with varying degrees of success within her "reality definition." The difficulties created



"High priestess of 'goodness' . . ." Olivia de Havilland in "The Heiress".

by her success in *Born Yesterday*, the struggle that is bound to come between her talent and the decision of producers to type-cast, is already evident in *The Marrying Kind*, which I shall mention a little later.

VII

Various examples, from *The Magnificent Ambersons* to *Julius Caesar*, show that even without a common method of interpretation much individual excellence can come about in the cinema. Strong sympathies between actor and director often result in work of powerful truth, and repeated collaboration can also quicken responses and evolve a working language. But the sum total of all the good acting in films makes up only a small percentage of the film acting product. This would be relatively unimportant if the entirely different values prevailing in the average product were not determining general standards—standards inimical to the best, and sapping the vitality of the whole medium. The confusion of acting aims under general conditions, then, offers no chance of real interpretative truth. It offers only approximations of truth which are more readily accessible. These clichés of expression, or “rubber stamps” as Stanislavsky has called them, govern the majority of screen behaviour. Conventions of extreme rigidity are established. Sharp definitions of “tone” and limit are unconsciously set to screen behaviour; much of our so-called realistic acting has come to represent not so much life, as ways of screen life. It can be seen, at its most familiar level, in many “superior” entertainment films from various countries; in *La Minute de Vérité* and *Don Camillo*, in *Lease of Life*, *The Purple Plain*, *Simba*, in *Night People*, *Dial M for Murder*, *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*. In all these films the actors are executants of varying competence, but the very method of their competence can result in nothing creative or firsthand in their characterisations. Of course there are other considerations—the material does not always permit anything more, conditions may defeat even the best of actors—but the total result can only be a lowering of standards. So insidiously has the validity of this kind of human behaviour been asserted, and so easeful and without shock are the responses it invites, that even when pushed to caricature it can still escape opprobrium. Thus in *Caged*, Eleanor Parker, crippled with sensitivity and agape with innocence, carried this particular line in “goodness” even further than Olivia de Havilland, hitherto high priestess of the quality, had dared. For this the Venice festival jury (uncynically) awarded her a prize.

Here, indeed, is the ever-growing danger. To desert the tone and territory of this screen life is to court hostility outside the unrepresentative West End of London. The possible directions along which sympathy can be led become more and more fixed within stagnating conventions. The hysteria evoked in many audiences by Agnes Moorehead in *The Magnificent Ambersons* has now abated; nowadays on its frequent London revivals, audience response is controlled by devotees. But I have seen this film outside London, with unspecialised audiences, where the reactions have been at such a pitch of intensity that whole sequences were lost, and the tension of a prison riot whipped up in the auditorium. Again, in *The Marrying Kind*, audiences denied the comfort of a recognised formula were unequal to the complex response demanded by its many brilliant scenes. George Cukor (under whose guidance quality of performance is the most consistently high) directed the playing of Judy Holliday and Aldo Ray into an unusually meaningful expression of the tensions of marriage. No sentimental film, *The Marrying Kind* says in effect that people are victims, at the mercy of the way of life they have invented (a cuff-link traps the hand at the precise moment when dignity demands the suave gesture), that everyone is lonely in his heart and that it is not within the power of married life to alter this—less illusory values must be discovered in it. To make this statement involves a clear attempt at creating a reality with a denser complexity of tone than the usual comedy-drama where, if the impact of the drama is to be full, the comedy must be warm, simple, and full of “heart.” These finer shadings could never be caught by actors dealing in stock responses. In the best scenes of the film, the creative imagination has been strongly stimulated and the actors make a notable impact; occasionally, there are scenes which merely plug Judy Holliday’s familiar personality assets (possible

front-office pressure?), and instantly reveal the lessened involvement and a weakening of the actress’s authority. These moments rob the film of the over-all quality which alone might have commanded respect for the wider area of experience in which it deals. The audiences with which I have seen it refused point-blank to respond with any agility to the changing climates, and made a consistent comic evaluation of everything. In this, of course, they were encouraged by the bad scenes, which assured them it was just the ordinary dumb-blonde stuff. When, at the death of the child, laughter became out of the question, hostility set in.

A final extraordinary example of an audience’s quickness to suspect the unfamiliar is the recent *The Divided Heart*. In many scenes, the urgent stillness of Yvonne Mitchell’s truth evoked mockery, while the more conventional but equally emotional performance of Cornell Borchers imposed respect.

This rejection by an audience occurs when, with feelings already closely involved, it is required to react to an unusual pattern of truthful behaviour. The emotional adventure involved in endorsing its validity, and feeling “with” it, is refused. Sympathy is withdrawn, an uneasy state is set up and reconverted into “superiority” by derisive laughter.

False worlds in the cinema have gained their injurious ascendancy through long familiarity. As a nation, we possess a high record of fidelity towards old entertainment conventions, even when their vitality is no more than the rattle of dry bones. But the cinema’s commercial and artistic future is with those vital aspects of interpretation which are universally meaningful; and truth in behaviour, no matter how national the terms, deals in these.

VIII

All actors necessarily act by some method, even though in the majority of cases it is not consciously formulated. The actor soon learns that a direct onslaught on “sincerity” or upon any other quality produces results that are only laughably naïve. In America, the most ambitious and recognised acting method, which stems from the Group Theatre of the 30’s, is demonstrated in *On the Waterfront* (a film which, interestingly, has not met with uniformly sympathetic audience reactions in this country). Clearly, Kazan’s conditions offer an unusual degree of integrity, and the resultant acting level is unusually high. But it is robbed of ultimate conviction by a final dishonesty. Just as in the very condemnation of the tough squalor there lurks something of loving or fascinated approval, so the acting, while aiming at truth, still reserves a final flick “out front.” A watch is kept for the saleable aspects of personality that can be shown to advantage. For every telling, unusual gesture or startlingly right inflexion, there is still an implied “did you get that?” In England, for the interpretation of realistic drama (and, indeed, for the re-animation of many other dramatic forms), there is no formulated method as comprehensive as Stanislavsky’s. In its wider acceptance this method could offer a unity of style invaluable in the formal creation of a work, a common working language, and a guide to achieving the maximum interpretative truth on the maximum number of occasions. Utterly to be combated is the widely current notion among actors that this method is precious and effete intellectual. It is simply a proven practical working method. Its superiority is immeasurable over the vague, unrelated dabs at voice, deportment and fencing training, and the various other activities which now stand in place of an organised method in our dramatic schools, and which all leave the young actor defenceless against the worst professional tendencies so quickly ingrained.

Although the clichés of bad acting in the theatre are entirely different from those in the cinema, the fact that good in the theatre can pass unchanged into good in the cinema argues that the right training can serve both. The recognised practice of this would set values by which good and bad acting would become more constructively available to criticism, and a true method would offer an accurate terminology invaluable to actor, director and critic. To start a film with the knowledge that some unity of interpretative ideals existed, would favour a more frequent achievement of something nearer the level of the Gorki film’s quality.



JACQUES DONIOL-VALCROZE
and ANDRE BAZIN

Conversation with BUNUEL

The National Film Theatre is shortly to present a season of films by Luis Bunuel, with whom the editors of Cahiers du Cinéma recently recorded an interview on tape. We are very grateful to Cahiers du Cinéma for permission to reprint this material, which has been translated from the French and slightly abridged.

BUNUEL IN CULVER CITY

L.B. In 1930, after *L'Age d'Or*, I left for Hollywood. I had a contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

A.B. Because of *L'Age d'Or*?

L.B. Yes, because of *L'Age d'Or*. Metro had seen the film in Paris, and immediately signed up the leading actress, Lia Lys. Then they offered me a Hollywood contract. But I refused. Ultimately, I'm not interested in making films under conditions like that. In Paris I was free to make the kind of films I wanted, with the help of friends who gave me money. So Metro engaged me as an "observer"—to go out for six months and "observe" how they made films in Hollywood, from script to cutting-room. . . . I met Autant-Lara again out there. He had been engaged to make French versions. The first day, the supervisor looked at my contract and said: "*It's very odd, this contract, but still. . . . How would you like to begin: in the studio, at a script conference, or in the cutting-room?*" I chose the studio. So he said: "*Greta Garbo is working on Stage 24; would you go there and observe for a month?*" I went, and as I entered the studio I saw Greta Garbo, making up. She looked at me out of the corner of her eye, wondering who this stranger was, and then she said something in a language I didn't understand (it was English)—at that time I could only say "Good morning"—and she made a sign to somebody, who showed me the door. From that day forward, I only came in to get paid every Saturday at noon, and nobody bothered any more about me. After three months of this, I went to see the supervisor again, who asked me to look at a test of Lili Damita—you remember Lili Damita? He said: "*You're Spanish?*" I said: "*Yes, but I'm here as a Frenchman, because I was engaged in Paris.*" "*All the same,*" the supervisor answered, "*Mr. Thalberg has asked that you go and see a Spanish film with Lili*

Damita." "Tell Mr. Thalberg," I replied. . . . Can I say what I told him?

D.V. Of course.

L.B. I told him I couldn't waste time going to look at women like that. That was the end. A month later my contract was terminated—it still had two months to run. I came back to France, they paid the return fare and one month's salary in place of the two. That's all I did in Hollywood.

SPAIN AND NEW YORK

A.B. What would you say is the relation between a film like *Land Without Bread* and your previous work? How do you see the relation between surrealism and the documentary standpoint?

L.B. I see an important relation. I made *Land Without Bread* because I had a surrealist vision and because I was interested in the problem of man. And surrealism made me look at reality in a completely different way. . . .

A.B. Did you stay in Spain after *Land Without Bread* to work in the cinema?

L.B. After *Land Without Bread* I worked in Paris. I didn't want to make any more films.* I had enough to live on, thanks to my family, but I became a little ashamed of doing nothing. So I worked for Paramount in Paris for two years, dubbing; then I was sent to Spain by Warner Brothers to supervise their co-productions. I did more dubbing there. Then I found a friend, Urgoiti, with whom I began to make films as producer. I produced four uninteresting ones—I can't remember the titles. Then came the Civil War. I thought the end of the world had come, that one should start thinking about something more worthwhile than making films, and I placed myself at the service of the Republican Government in Paris. They sent me to Hollywood in '38 on a "diplomatic mission"—to supervise, as "technical adviser," two films on Republican Spain. Over there, the end of the war took me by surprise. I found myself stranded in America, unemployed. Thanks

* *Land Without Bread* (1932) was banned by the Spanish Government, who considered it insulting to Spain, and opposed its showing abroad. It did not reach France till 1937.



"Some more disturbing objects . . ." Delia Garcia. Arturo de Cordova in "El".

to Miss Iris Barry, I was given work at the Museum of Modern Art. I had hopes of doing big things, but it turned out to be a bureaucratic job. I had fifteen or twenty people under me. I worked on Latin-American versions of films. I stayed there four years. In 1942, I was obliged to resign because I had made *L'Age d'Or*. Miss Iris Barry accepted my resignation with tears in her eyes. It was the day of Mers el Kebir; the atmosphere was dramatic. Some journalists came to see me, but I refused all interviews; I thought at that moment it wasn't important whether Mr. Bunuel was in or out of the Museum. I was very sad, I hadn't saved any money, and for the next few days I got by as best I could, on the whole worse rather than better. Then the American Engineers engaged me as commentator for American army films. I recorded "my fine voice" for fifteen or twenty films on welding, explosives, aircraft components—in fact, for the technical films they were making at the time.

A.B. You spoke English so well?

L.B. No, it was always for Spanish versions.

D.V. Had your departure from the Museum any direct connection with Dali's book? Was it through his book they discovered you made *L'Age d'Or*?

L.B. Yes.

A.B. And after that you worked for the American Engineers?

L.B. Yes, in New York. Then I was hired in Hollywood by Warner Brothers, who were planning a series of Spanish versions. I must tell you I'm lazy—but when I work, I work. They engaged me as producer, and I was well paid. But the work on Spanish versions never started, and I was once more taken on as dubbing specialist.

D.V. What year have we reached now?

L.B. I spent two years in Hollywood, from '44 to '46, and as I was relatively well paid, I could save enough to realise my ideal for one year: doing nothing. In spite of everything I was penniless again in 1946, when Denise Tual† arranged for me to go to Mexico. She wanted me to make a film in France. I was delighted, I saw the skies opening. . . . It was going to be *The House of Bernarda*, but it fell through because Garcia Lorca's family had already sold the rights. However, while I was in Mexico I met Oscar Dancigers, who proposed that I make a film for him. I made it, and I've been in Mexico ever since.

LOS OLVIDADOS

A.B. What was the film?

L.B. A film with songs. They sang tangos and I don't know what else—a lot, anyhow. It was called *Gran Casino*. . . . It wasn't very successful, and I did nothing for the next two years.

* *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali* was published in 1942.

† Maker of the compilation film, *Ce Siecle a 50 ans*, and wife of Roland Tual, producer of *Les Anges du Péché*, *Voyage Surprise*, etc.

D.V. Has Oscar Dancigers always been your producer there?

L.B. Yes, he's a man to whom I owe a great deal. Thanks to him I was able to stay on in Mexico and make films.

A.B. It's often said that you work under very "commercial" conditions in Mexico. Is production there organised in such a way that you have to make thrillers or very trivial films?

L.B. Yes—and I've always yielded to that.

A.B. But *Los Olvidados*?

L.B. With *Los Olvidados* it was different. After the failure of *Gran Casino* and two years of doing nothing, Dancigers asked me to submit an idea for a film for children. Timidly, I offered him the treatment of *Los Olvidados*, which I'd already written with my friend Luis Alcoriza. He liked it and told me to work on it. Between times, an opportunity came to make a commercial comedy, and Dancigers suggested I did that first, in exchange for which he promised me a degree of freedom on *Los Olvidados*. So, in sixteen days I made *Gran Calavera*, which had a big success, and I was able to start on *Los Olvidados*. Certainly Dancigers asked me to take out a number of things I wanted to put in the film, but he left me a certain freedom.

A.B. What kind of things?

L.B. Everything I took out had a uniquely symbolic interest. Into the most realistic scenes, I wanted to introduce some mad, completely disparate elements. For instance, when Jaibo goes to beat up and kill the other boy, a camera movement reveals, in the distance, the framework of a huge eleven-storey building under construction. I wanted to put an orchestra with a hundred musicians in that building. One would only have seen it in passing, vaguely. I wanted to put in many elements of that kind, but it was absolutely forbidden.

A.B. What you've just revealed is very important. . . . It seems to run counter to the kind of realism that many people have stressed about the film.

L.B. For me *Los Olvidados* is, in effect, a film of social struggle. Because I believe, in a simple way, I'm honest with myself, I had to make a social type of work. I knew I was moving in that direction. Apart from that, I had absolutely no wish to make a film that stated a particular case. I had observed some things which moved me, which I wanted to transfer to the screen—but, always, with the

kind of love I bear for the instinctive and the irrational. I've always been attracted by the unknown or strange side of things, which fascinates me without my knowing why.

EL AND OTHERS

A.B. What does *El* represent in your Mexican work? Did you knowingly introduce something that some of us thought we saw in the film—I mean a kind of *L'Age d'Or* watermark on a deliberately concocted script?

L.B. No, really, I had no intention of consciously imitating or following *L'Age d'Or*. The hero of *El* is a type that interests me as a beetle or a disease-carrying fly does. . . . I've always found insects exciting. . . . I have an entomological side. The examination of reality interests me very much. With *El*, I followed my usual course in Mexico; I was offered a film, and instead of accepting something completely ordinary I tried to make a counter-offer—something which, though it's still commercial, looks more propitious for expressing some of the things that interest me. That was the case with *El*. I hadn't thought of *L'Age d'Or*. Consciously, I wanted to make a film about Love and Jealousy. But I can see, of course, that one is attracted to the same sources of inspiration, to the same dreams, and that I was able to do some things similar to *L'Age d'Or*.

D.V. And the quite frightening scene when the husband wants to stitch up his wife: did the producers understand it?

L.B. I don't know. There was no precise intention of imitating Sade here, though it's possible I may have done so without realising it. It's natural for me to see and think out a situation from a *Sadique* or a sadist point of view—rather than, shall we say, a neo-realist or a mystic one. I said to myself: what should the character take—a revolver? a knife? a chair? I finished by choosing some more disturbing objects. That's all.

D.V. And, at the end, when the hero—who's become a monk—walks off in a zigzag pattern: what does that mean to you?

L.B. Nothing. It made me laugh a lot to watch him go off in a zigzag. It suggests nothing special, but it gave me pleasure.

A.B. If *Los Olvidados* was made with relative freedom, *El* was made to order, and you introduced into it—consciously or not—quite a few personal things. But do you think that *Suzanna*, for instance, and *Subida al Cielo* are little commercial films into which you were able to put, from time to time, something personal? To us they seem more important than you apparently suggest, and we discovered considerable riches in them. Do they represent nothing more than commercial work to you?

L.B. No. I measure them by the pleasure I got from making them. *Suzanna* would have been more interesting if I could have made a different ending. . . . *Subida al Cielo* I liked very much. I like the moments when nothing happens, the man who says "Give me a match." That kind of thing interests me very much. "Give me a match" interests me enormously—or "Do you want to eat?" or "What time is it?" I made *Subida al Cielo* a little in this sense.

A fantasy sequence from Bunuel's latest comedy, "The Street-Car". Centre, Lilia Prado.





A location from "Los Olvidados".

D.V. What is the chronological order of your films after *Los Olvidados*?

L.B. After *Los Olvidados* I made *Suzanna*, then another film which won't be seen abroad, I can't remember the title. . . . Then I made *Subida al Cielo*, and then *El Bruto*, also shot very quickly: eighteen days. *El Bruto* could have been good, the scenario I wrote with Alcoriza was interesting, but they made me change everything. And it's only a so-so film, not extraordinary.

D.V. And then you made *Robinson Crusoe*?

L.B. After *El Bruto* I made four films . . . *Robinson Crusoe*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Street-Car*—a story of two workers who steal a street-car, they start from a café and streak through the town in the stolen car. . . . There's one quite interesting reel. The fourth film is *Death and the River*, it's about death à la Mexicaine, what's called "easy death." . . . You know, when a man dies, there are people around who go on calmly smoking and drinking their little drinks—life is a little thing, death doesn't count. The film has seven deaths, four burials and I don't know how many funeral vigils. . . .

CRUSOE AND WUTHERING HEIGHTS

A.B. Is *Robinson Crusoe* an important film for you?

L.B. *Robinson*, like the others, was offered to me. I didn't like the book, but I liked the character, and I

accepted it because there is a certain purity about him. First of all, it's man face to face with nature. . . . I tried to do some things that could have been interesting. I think something remains—some so-called surrealist and, apparently, incomprehensible passages were cut. . . . I made the film as I could, I wanted to portray human solitude above everything else, the anguish of man without human society. I also wanted to treat the subject of Love—I mean, the lack of love or friendship, man without the society of either man or woman. All the same, I think the relationship between Crusoe and Friday remains clear in spite of the cuts; the relationship between the "superior" Anglo-Saxon and the "inferior" negro race. That is to say, at first Robinson, imbued with his own superiority, is mistrustful, but at the end the two discover a great human brotherhood. . . .

A.B. And *Wuthering Heights*?

L.B. That's curious. It's a film I wanted to make at the time of *L'Age d'Or*. It's a great book for surrealists. I think it was George Sadoul who translated it. They liked the side of the book that elevates a mad love above everything—and naturally, as I was in the group, I had the same ideas about love and found it a great novel. But I never found a backer, the film languished among my papers, and was made in Hollywood eight or nine years later. I hadn't thought about it any more until Dancigers,

who had two stars, Mistral and Irasema Diliam, both very well known in Spain, under contract, asked me to make a film from a script I didn't like. Then he reminded me that I'd once mentioned my adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*, and I showed it to him. He accepted it. Really, I was no longer interested in making this film, and I didn't try any innovations. It remains the film I conceived in 1930, a 24-year-old film, but I think it's faithful to the spirit of Emily Brontë. It's a very harsh film, without concessions, and it respects the novel's attitude to love.

A.B. Under present production conditions in Mexico, you have to make your films very quickly, don't you?

L.B. Very quickly. Except *Crusoe*. The others I shot in twenty-five days. That's not exceptional for Mexico. Some people are even quicker. . . .

SURREALISM AND THE CINEMA

A.B. After what you've said, I can see you've never broken your ties with surrealism—if you're no longer with the movement in an official orthodox sense, its inspiration remains. You wouldn't disown the formative influence of surrealism—on the contrary, it's a living and purposeful memory for you?

L.B. I don't disown it at all. It was surrealism which revealed to me that, in life, there is a moral path man cannot refuse to take. Through surrealism I discovered for the first time that man isn't free. I believed in the total liberty of man, but surrealism showed me a discipline to follow. It was one of the great lessons of my life, it was a marvellous, poetic step forward. I haven't been officially in the group for a long time.

A.B. You've said that you very seldom go to the cinema. . . . How many times a year do you go?

L.B. Very few. I don't want to exaggerate, let's say four times. Perhaps six, perhaps two, but on average four.

A.B. Then what leads you to the cinema rather than to another kind of work, or another medium of expression, like the novel or painting?

L.B. I don't like going to the cinema but I love the

cinema as a means of expression. I've found there's nothing better to show us the reality we touch with our fingers every day. I mean that through books, through newspapers, through our own experiences, we recognise an exterior and objective reality. The cinema, by virtue of its actual mechanism, opens a little window on the extension of this reality. As a spectator, I ask that a film *discovers* something for me—and that happens very rarely. The rest doesn't amuse me, I'm too old. . . . Naturally I have friends who recommend a picture they've liked, and make me go and see it. That was how I saw *Jeux Interdits*, which opened a little window for me. I also saw *Portrait of Jennie*, which I like very much, which opened a big window for me. From a professional point of view I'm unforgivable, I ought to know more films, I ought to go to the cinema every day. . . . I'm the first to reproach myself. . . . It's very bad, I know, but I prefer to stay quietly at home with a bottle of whisky and some friends. . . .

A.B. All the same, you told me one day how, thanks to Denise Tual, you were able to see Robert Bresson's *Les Anges du Péché*, and that your chief memory of the film was of a nun whose feet were being kissed.

L.B. Ah! A very fine scene, and a very fine film.

A.B. I was a little surprised, because this image didn't strike me as one of the most characteristic of *Les Anges du Péché*!

L.B. I see what you mean. . . . In practice, I'm not in the least sadistic or masochistic. Only in theory—and I only accept these elements as elements of struggle and violence. In the whole of Bresson's film I had a presentiment of something about to happen, something that attracted me very much. In the final scene, no doubt, it came disturbingly out into the open. That's why I chiefly remember that someone kissed the dead nun's feet. But, having said this, I don't personally like kissing the feet of dead nuns, or of green cows—or anybody's feet. . . . In that case it was just that certain occult feelings, present throughout the film, came into flower. . . .



STAR RATINGS: *Disgusting and Highly Objectionable. **Very Poor—Not Worth The Money. ***Not So Bad.—*Classification for Review Section of "Filmindia."*

Stills from the 1905 film classic *The Battleship Potemkin* have been banned by the Chief Constable of Nottingham, Captain Athelstan Popkess, because they are "too gruesome." The film is being shown at the Victoria, Nottingham, which specialises in foreign films.—*The Cinema*.

I'd be more interested in filming Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, for instance; that would be very easy for me.—*Alfred Hitchcock*.

Tea was brought by a junior (female). "What word would you use to describe Donald Sinden?" the girl was asked. A slightly glazed look came over her face as she whispered softly, "SMASHING."

—*Studio News from Shepperton*.

There seems to be unusual competition to film Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. An announcement in New York makes it known that Paramount is now a financial partner with Ponti di Laurentiis in the Italian Lux film group to make a film of this particular classic at a budgeted cost of four and a half million dollars. Meantime Mike Todd is making the identical project in his own Todd-AO panoramic system, and Dave Selznick declares that he is still planning to make the Tolstoy subject. Meanwhile Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer still hold the title rights.—*The Cinema*.

APACHE.—The few who came sat this one out. O.K. if you can't get anything better, which is almost impossible.—"What the Picture did for Me" showmen's report in *"Motion Picture Herald."*

The producers of *The Golden Horde* were sued for over a million dollars on account of injuries received during the filming of the big spectacular scenes in this picture. When you see these thrilling scenes on the screen you will readily understand why.—*Advt. for "The Golden Horde" in "The Springfield Daily News."*

GRAHAM GREENE'S STORY "THE END OF THE AFFAIR" reveals the unforgettable secret life of a woman who asked-and-got-what is granted only to the happy few.—*Advt. for "The End of the Affair" in "New Statesman."*

In this dramatic story [*Not as a Stranger*] concerning the medical profession, Stanley Kramer and his stars not only practically lived with doctors and nurses at various hospitals for months in order to absorb feeling and atmosphere, but they witnessed 35 abdominal operations and 15 post-mortems. They watched abdominal operations, surgery for cancer, the removal of a tumour from the spinal cord, emergency appendectomies, and complex heart operations. . . .—*United Artists News*.

Cukor and the Kanins



IN 1939 George Cukor made *The Women* and Garson Kanin made *Bachelor Mother*; and Capra directed *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Garbo laughed in *Ninotchka* and the Marx Brothers were *At the Circus*. In 1954, as writer and director, Kanin and Cukor produced, in *It Should Happen to You*, probably the most authentically entertaining Hollywood comedy of a humourless year. Since the death of Lubitsch, Capra's retirement from the screen, and the prolonged absence of Preston Sturges and of such players as Jean Arthur, Rosalind Russell and Cary Grant, comedy—the comedy of manners, of situation and of character—has been gradually drifting out of fashion. It isn't surprising: the type of film that needs neither wide screen nor colour, that depends on a level of style and wit attained equally in writing, in playing and in direction, is not the most popular these days. And to compare, say, the smooth elegance of *The Philadelphia Story* with the heavy-weight tactics of the not dissimilar *Sabrina Fair*, or the brittle malice of *The Women* with the glum wisecracking of Nunnally Johnson's three millionaire hunters, is to note the slackening of technique, the falling off in visual and verbal style.

But if comedy looks like being one of the screen casualties of the 'fifties, there agreeably remains the little group of films made over the last few years by George Cukor as director and Garson Kanin and his wife, Ruth Gordon, as screen writers. They are, so to speak, non-vintage pictures; they don't so conspicuously glitter and they won't perhaps wear so well as some of their predecessors from the greater years. But they stand out from the current run of production by virtue of an individuality



by Penelope Houston

determinedly preserved, and a sense that here are films concerned not merely to turn out a string of saleable jokes, but to explore a little the causes for laughter in the human situation. Not all the films made by these partners have been comedies; not all have the same credits—*Born Yesterday* was adapted by another writer from Kanin's play, the reminiscent *The Actress* by Ruth Gordon from her own play *Years Ago*, husband and wife together wrote *A Double Life*, *Adam's Rib*, *The Marrying Kind* and *Pat and Mike*, and Kanin alone was responsible for *It Should Happen to You*. The films bear, though, the same recognisable stamp. It was to enquire into the partnership responsible that I called on Garson Kanin, who is established here while Ruth Gordon plays in *The Matchmaker*, and on George Cukor, briefly in London en route to Pakistan and *Bhowani Junction*.

II

There is a quality of alert, tough-minded acuity, a suggestion of being immensely on the spot, that, although we don't often encounter it, we customarily regard as characteristic of the New Yorker. Urbane yet incisive, Garson Kanin has something of this manner, and at once one is reminded that, whatever part Hollywood has played in his career, it has never wholly claimed him. He had been actor and stage director (working with George Abbott on such celebrated farces as *Three Men on a Horse* and *Room Service*, later on his own), before, in 1938, he went to Hollywood to direct for R.K.O. the seven films which included, notably, *Bachelor Mother*, *They Knew What They Wanted* and *Tom, Dick and Harry*. Since the war, and since directing the American half of *The True Glory*,

he has been playwright, stage producer and screen writer, but has not again worked in the cinema as a director. This transition from directing to writing came about, he said, partly through the difficulty of persuading other writers around to his precise way of thinking. It brings up, inevitably, the old chicken and the egg argument of the cinema, the question of where creative responsibility ultimately lies. And in this case, working in either capacity, Kanin has put a clear signature on his films. The partnership, as George Cukor confirms, is between the "creative" writer and the "interpretative" director.

Contracted to no studio, Garson Kanin and Ruth Gordon are able to write as they please. It is when the script is completed that the partnership begins, and it is in exhaustive discussions that the film takes definitive shape. "Bespoke tailoring," said Kanin, "nothing machine made." Producers have been persuaded to take chances with little-known actors, or with players from outside Hollywood—Tom Ewell, the laconic victim of Judy Holliday's bullet in *Adam's Rib*, Jack Lemmon, a television actor until he co-starred in *It Should Happen to You*, Aldo Ray, the melancholy boxer of *Pat and Mike* and the husband of *The Marrying Kind*, and Judy Holliday herself, whose starring part in *Born Yesterday* by no means followed automatically from her stage success. Individual too is their preference for shooting in New York locations, in Central Park, in the streets, in office blocks, so that the soap tycoon's offices in *It Should Happen to You* are, in fact, the opulent headquarters of a real estate agent.

It all seemed to come back, though, to the conferences, the elaborate advance planning of staging and interpreta-

tion, which extends to a tape-recording by the Kanins of the film's dialogue. Cukor, Kanin added, had been labelled as a "woman's director," one whose talent was restricted to handling star players brilliantly in plushy surroundings. "Untrue," Kanin said, "he's also a very good camera technician. He knows exactly what he wants and how to get it." Was the collaboration, I asked, the result of accident or design? "Good luck," Kanin said firmly.

It was not difficult, meeting George Cukor, to appreciate a little this celebrated "brilliance with actors." Quiet, lucid, very detached in talking about his own films, he gives the impression of a wholly unostentatious confidence, a craftsman's self-reliance. On the set he wouldn't, one felt, hesitate, and there would be little room for misunderstanding. We spoke about CinemaScope ("an inconvenient shape, but you can do things with it"), about colour ("you can do a great deal with it; you should use colour to emphasise detail, direct attention to a point on the screen, not spread it all over"). One began to imagine that if he were handed the telephone directory and asked to make a film of it, Cukor would give it a reflective look and say, "not very promising, perhaps—but you can do something with it."

Cukor's record as a film-maker, of course, attests enough to this craftsmanship. Essentially a sound director, he went to Hollywood from the New York theatre in 1929, to act as dialogue director on a picture called *River of Romance*, and on *All Quiet on the Western Front*. He co-directed three features (including *Royal Family of Broadway*, the joke at the expense of the Barrymores) in

(Continued on page 190)

"A Double Life": the murder. Shelley Winters, Ronald Colman.



A Sequence from 'THE MARRYING KIND'

In Judge Carroll's room in the court-house, the Judge (Madge Kennedy), Chet Keefer (Aldo Ray) and Florence Keefer (Judy Holliday) begin to discuss the events leading to the break-up of the Keefers' marriage.

1. **Medium Close Shot.** Judge Carroll, Florence Keefer and Chet Keefer are sitting round the table.

JUDGE CARROLL (lighting cigarette): *Do you agree with this Mr. Jenner about your marriage is dead?*

FLORENCE: *I think so.*

JUDGE CARROLL (to Chet): *What about you?*

CHET: *I don't know what I think by now.*

JUDGE CARROLL: *How did you happen to meet?*

During the following dialogue, **camera starts to move in** past Judge Carroll to **close 2-shot** of Florence and Chet.

FLORENCE: *What's the difference?*

CHET: *It wasn't anything special.*

FLORENCE: *We just . . . we happened to.*

CHET: *Just a pick up.*

FLORENCE: *It was not!*

CHET: *O.K., it was not.*

JUDGE CARROLL: *Where?*

CHET: *Central Park.*

Camera moves in to close shot of Florence. During Chet's next sentence, **dissolve** to Central Park. Long Shot.

CHET: *It was one summer, and I had this friend George Bastion, and we had a habit of every Saturday afternoon, sometimes Sundays, to go over in the Park and horse around . . .*

2. **Central Park. Long Shot.** Chet and George are walking along a path towards the camera.

CHET'S VOICE: . . . *play a game of ball, get a row-boat, pitch pennies. . . . But this one day we happened to be walking along having a discussion. We were figurin' this idea back and forth, about the post office see where the both of us work, and we were real engrossed like you get on scientific subjects . . .*

Chet and George are by now in the foreground. Florence and another girl appear on right of frame, coming towards them.

. . . *Next thing you know, these two girls come walking right through between us.*

Florence and the other girl walk between Chet and George.

3. **Reverse Angle.** Chet and George are half-turned from camera looking after the two girls.

. . . *So we looked them over, and George says: 'Bet you a buck they look back!' So I said 'Bet!' So sure enough they look back.*

The girls, in the background, turn round: Chet raises his hat.

FLORENCE'S VOICE: *We did not!*

CHET'S VOICE: *I remember paying him the buck!*

. . . *So then George gets this idea to cut around this other path and run, see, very fast, up and around past them . . .*

The two men begin to run. **Camera pans slightly** with them.

. . . *I didn't want to do it, but he drags me practically over a hill there. I don't go in for that kind of kid stuff, but George—that's how he is.*

4. **Medium Shot.** The two girls are in the foreground, walking away from the camera. During the following commentary, Chet and George appear in front of them on the path, walking towards them.

. . . *I couldn't talk him out of it, and I couldn't hold him back, so . . . On the other side . . .*

5. **Closer Shot.** Camera still behind the girls. Chet and George approach them and, during the following commentary, walk between them. Then all four turn to look round, before walking on in opposite directions.

. . . *Sure enough, there they were, givin' us the eye, and we come right through between them. And we kept right on walking, we never looked back at all.*

FLORENCE'S VOICE: *It so happens I remember it different!*

CHET'S VOICE: *That's how it was. Then George says to do it again. So we go racin' around . . .*

6. **Medium Shot.** The two girls are in the foreground, walking towards the camera, which **pans with them** as they take a turn in the path. Chet and George appear in front of them.

. . . *And by this time we figured they must have been goin' crazy, and we just sort of kidded them along as if we knew them . . .*

Chet and George pass the girls, raising their hats.

FLORENCE'S VOICE: *As if we weren't wise to the whole gag all along.*

CHET'S VOICE: *And again we didn't look back.*

FLORENCE'S VOICE: *We neither.*

All four turn to look back, then walk on out of the frame in opposite directions.

CHET'S VOICE: . . . *But by this time I'd kind of got a good look at them and they looked nice, you know, regular . . . not just a couple of ordinary girls.*

Chet and George reappear from the left, followed by the two girls from the right.

. . . *I don't remember what happened next, but next thing you know we're all standin' around talking. . . .*

All four are standing in a group. **Camera moves in** to waist level.

. . . *There's George right away with the address book. That's the kind of guy he was. And I said to him 'put it away', but no, he keeps trying to date them up. That George, he has no resistance. So then we started goin' around together. . . .*

7. **Quick Dissolve** to night scene. A car is driving towards the camera. During the following commentary it turns, **the camera moving with it**, and pulls up outside a brightly lighted cinema. We see the two couples.

. . . *the four of us. Two couples. I remember one time we drove out to Long Island to this drive-in movie place . . .*

Camera pulls away from the car, up to the cinema frontage.

. . . *Around about now we'd got to be pretty friendly with each other. We'd tried switching dates on different nights, but the way it seemed to jell was George with Marion and Florence with me . . .*

8. **Spin Wipe** to car driving away from cinema: it again pulls up (reverse direction) opposite the cinema frontage.

. . . *I remember I drove out but he drove back. To tell you the truth, that was the way I had it figured . . .*

The car begins to move forward.

. . . *I used to enjoy telling her all my troubles at the post office.*

9. **Quick Dissolve to Close Shot:** Chet and Florence are standing in her hallway.

. . . *And it was right there that night in Florence's hallway the subject came up. The subject about gettin' married I mean. I didn't bring it; she brought it.*

FLORENCE'S VOICE (crossly): *How?*

CHET'S VOICE: *By you sayin', 'How come a fella like you isn't even married? What are you waitin' for, the boss's daughter?' I remember laughing because I thought it was pretty cute at the time.*

Florence sits down by the stairs, **camera moving** with her.

. . . *But anyways we got talkin' about it pretty serious, and I started in explaining something about my theory I held at that time. My theory was I didn't want to get married . . .*

10. **Quick Dissolve** on Chet's last sentence to group shot of the wedding.

1



1a



2



3



6



6a



8



9



9a



10

1930, was Lubitsch's assistant on *One Hour with You*, and directed his first independent features, *Tarnished Lady* (with Tallulah Bankhead) and *Girls About Town*, in 1931. From the smart comedies for Paramount ("I said some funny things, so they thought I was rather sophisticated"), he went on to work at R.K.O. and then, fairly consistently from the mid-thirties to the mid-forties, at M-G-M. The "woman's picture" tag came from his films with Hepburn (*Bill of Divorcement*, *Sylvia Scarlett*, *Holiday*, *Philadelphia Story*), with Garbo (*Camille*, *Two Faced Woman*) and with Joan Crawford (*Susan and God*, *A Woman's Face*). And in the period when Hollywood took to the almost wholesale adaptation of the classics, Cukor directed, in *Little Women*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and, notably, *David Copperfield*, three of the most stylishly successful of these literary reconstructions. Later, one remembers two disappointing pictures from the mid-forties—the intriguing but rather uneasily pretentious *Keeper of the Flame*, and *Murder in Thornton Square*, the elaborately romanticised working-over of Patrick Hamilton's *Gaslight*. There followed the partnership with the Kanins, and the iridescent *A Star is Born*.

Sooner or later, in writing about Cukor's films, one is likely to find oneself using words like "discreet" or "unobtrusive." He describes himself, very decidedly, as an "interpretative" director, whose concern is always to efface himself, to work through his actors. ("The interpretative director," he adds, "sometimes lasts longer; after all, he doesn't have to rely entirely on himself.") As far as technique goes—"other directors get their effects by photographing doorknobs turning and that sort of thing. I like to concentrate on the actors' faces." Inevitably, though, one wanted to investigate how it worked, how the superlatively natural, close-up scenes in *The Marrying Kind*, or the artificial high comedy of *The Philadelphia Story* were achieved. As inevitably, there could be no real answer: "I'm interested in people, in the way they behave," or, "*Philadelphia Story* wasn't difficult: there's a lot of action in that picture, a lot going on." I asked specifically about his technique of long takes, about scenes such as the interrogation of Judy Holliday in *Adam's Rib* or the card-game in *Born Yesterday*, shot without cuts, with no movement from the camera and little from the actors. "If the scene is funny in itself, you don't need to play about with it; once you get it right, you can go ahead." And "getting it right," for him, would appear to be as much as anything a matter of the script. With the Kanins, he said, it was easy, since the script always had a strongly defined basic idea. One wasn't likely, I felt, to get much closer to it than that.



III

A pamphlet of the early 'thirties, having to do with *Little Women*, announces: "Mr. Cukor says he could not do a melodrama because he could not believe it; he has too much sense of humour." *A Double Life* (1948, produced by Kanin's brother, Michael Kanin) was a melodrama which—although this is pure conjecture—its creators may be suspected not to have taken entirely seriously. It concerned an actor, playing Othello night after night to wild acclaim, who becomes obsessed with his part and eventually, as it were, possessed by it: he nearly finishes off his Desdemona on stage, and he does most effectively strangle a waitress with whom he has been having a half-hearted affair.

The film, unhappily, is no longer available in this country; it survives in the memory through the extravagant implausibility of its central situation (although Ronald Colman won an Oscar for a capable performance, he never wholly convinced either as a great Shakespearean actor or as a man possessed by a homicidal *alter ego*), through its striking visual style, with much low-key photography and many shrewdly calculated theatrical effects, and through the sophisticated astringency of its script. The Broadway milieu, the backstage tensions, the personal relationships in an enclosed and artificial world, were established with a sharp authority which extended to the playing of the minor parts, to Shelley Winters' drably dreadful waitress and Millard Mitchell's knowing reporter. This sense of a background exactly realised is a mark of the later pictures; here it went a long way towards making up for the story's improbabilities.

At any rate, the venture into melodrama was not repeated: *Adam's Rib* (1949) was a comedy made with a good deal of artifice and some wit. If there is a formula for the Hepburn-Tracy films, it is, I suppose, that of attack and defence: Hepburn throws punches, Tracy blocks them; Hepburn is nervous and on edge, Tracy monumentally calm. Each film represents another drawn engagement in their version of the war between men and women, and from this tempered clash of personalities the screen has derived some of its most accomplished and most expertly judged comedy. The situation in *Adam's Rib*—skirmishes in and out of court between a husband and wife, both lawyers, the wife a suffragette *manquée* and the husband a stubborn defender of the majesty of the law—was devised with considerable ingenuity. The particularly intimate comedy technique of these players, with its subtle suggestion of spontaneity, enables them to carry off long dialogue scenes without any of the slackening of pace that usually follows when the screen adopts the manner of the stage. Here the domestic interludes were presented with a very conscious theatrical emphasis, and Cukor manoeuvred his players almost as if they were performing on a stage set. The court scenes brought in two engaging subsidiary characters in the wife (Judy Holliday) who took a shot at her husband after first pausing to consult a textbook on fire-arms, and her ferociously self-righteous victim. Here situations were exaggerated, pushed towards comic absurdity; and it was through this balancing of one scene against another, the lively court room shenanigans against the closely and affectionately observed husband and wife relationship, that the comedy took on its individual flavour. It was, in fact, a very civilised entertainment, although the Kanins did not entirely resist the temptation to trade on the stars' particular mannerisms. In pursuing Hepburn's legal antics or Tracy's domestic sulks, the dialogue edged perceptibly into coyness.

Pat and Mike (1952) had as its simple starting point the fact that Katharine Hepburn is a good tennis player and a better golfer; and the Kanins devised a story which allowed her to take on first Gussie Moran and then Babe Zaharias, to show off a little ju-jitsu, and to spar amiably with Tracy, her imperturbable manager. Light in tone and texture, relaxed in style, the film surveyed the field of sport with a lively eye for its comic possibilities. But Aldo Ray's sulky boxer and Phyllis Povah's insufferably complacent golfer, like Hope Emerson's circus strong woman in *Adam's Rib*, were conceived as characters rather than caricatures. It is a distinction of these eminently well-mannered films that, however ridiculously people may behave, they are not in themselves ridiculous. The Hepburn-Tracy interchanges in *Pat and Mike* demonstrated, too, the Kanins' sure hand with easy, colloquial dialogue. They rely less on the wisecrack, the "smart" line, than most American comedy writers, preferring to allow the humour to emerge from a situation rather than to play that familiar, elaborate game in which each gag builds up



"It Should Happen to You". Jack Lemmon, Judy Holliday,

to the next, so that the jokes cannon off each other like billiard balls.

Meanwhile, in *Born Yesterday* (1950) Judy Holliday had repeated her stage role as Billie Dawn, the innocent in Washington, who acquires, along with an elementary education, a basic vocabulary of political insult ("Fascist!" "Cartels!") that already begins to date the play. In spite of the sharpness of much of the comic invention, the wit which intermittently lights up the dialogue, Kanin's play seems to me fundamentally more conventional in idiom than his screen writing has been. He begins by satirising his characters—Harry Brock, the tycoon from the junk-yards, and Billie Dawn, the blonde who "has everything—two, mink coats"—and then reduces them to more ordinary human proportions. Sentiment, in the Broadway manner, breaks through; and Billie performing a solitary little dance before the radio, or acquisitively playing cards, is more fun than Billie, softened and semi-educated, groping after the great political abstractions. If the film entertained rather less than the stage production, it was partly because the adaptation, involving tours of Washington's architectural splendours, sacrificed something in pace, partly because, four years after it was written, the play had begun to lose its cutting edge. Still, it gave Judy Holliday a chance to create her definitive study of the dumb blonde, to demonstrate her particular genius for presenting a character as simultaneously comic and touching, abysmally ignorant of the affairs of the world and shrewdly knowledgeable about human relationships. This was the sort of virtuoso performance that dominates a film, pushing everything else somewhat into the background; but it was probably the picture's strongest card, and Cukor played it for precisely what it was worth.

The Marrying Kind (1952) explored territory less familiar. Divorce, or an amiable pretence at divorce, with the couple separating in the first reel and coming together in the last (*vide Phffft*), is part of the stock in trade of Hollywood comedy. *The Marrying Kind* set out to investigate the ways in which a happy marriage could fall to pieces, to examine a little the illusions on which human happiness is based. The idea, as Garson Kanin described it to me, was that, "just because someone looks funny, has a funny personality, it doesn't mean that something serious can't happen to them—like being run over by a bus." So, taking for its starting point the basically comic personalities of Judy Holliday and Aldo Ray, the film developed almost as a tragi-comedy, touching life acutely at some points, losing it at others.

The sequence of the pick-up in the park (see pages 188-189) perhaps indicates something of the film's method: an episodic structure, short, economically written sequences, each designed to carry the relationship a stage further, slangy, naturalistic dialogue, and an immediate coming to terms with the characters. The man works in the post-office, the girl is a typist; they meet casually; they get married; they are subjected to stresses—minor quarrels, money troubles, finally and tragically the death of their child—which find them individually defenceless and unprepared. The marriage, in fact, goes under a microscope;

and it is precisely in this close, detailed observation of relationships that Cukor excels. Few directors play more fairly by their material, and when, as here, the writing is perceptive and accurate, he can be relied on to extract from the players the exact responses that will give a situation validity. *The Marrying Kind* caught the casual undertones of everyday life, with an awareness of the social scene which effectively proved that Cukor's sympathies extend beyond the highly sophisticated, highly articulate characters of *The Philadelphia Story* or the Hepburn-Tracy films. And although the leading players were not required to play, as it were, against the grain, to subordinate the distinctive comic personalities that are their strongest assets, there was little exploitation of personality for deliberate comic effect. In consequence, the two sharp, direct scenes—the child's death, the husband's memory of it, when he stops to buy a toy from a street vendor—which brought about the transition to a mood of complete seriousness, shocked, as they were meant to do, without jarring.

Here and there, the film lost this certainty of touch. There is a scene, for instance, in which the young wife entertains her relations to lunch. She is going, she announces, to think a little every day. "Think about what?" asks someone. "Not about anything . . . just think . . . people should think more," she says, with a remote, whimsical smile. The episode seemed unreal because here the actress was encouraged to go out of character, cutely to live up for the moment to the idea the public has of her.

Elsewhere in this issue, Derek Prouse comments on the rather uneasy audience reaction to this film, the temptation to make "a consistent comic evaluation of everything," which scenes such as this to some extent encouraged. Garson Kanin confirmed what one might already have suspected: the studio did not take altogether kindly to the more serious passages, preferring to put the emphasis on the outright comedy of the earlier sequences. The result was a degree of unbalance which affected the total impact, though not to the extent of drastically weakening it. *The Marrying Kind* was, in tone and intention, a lightweight film; it was also, more often than not, an unusually true one.

The more ordinary *It Should Happen to You* (1954) was a pleasing entertainment, a mild satirical survey of what might happen if a New York model acquired a number of billboards, plastered her unremarkable name across them, and waited for the television offers to roll in. This was a gaily original idea, and the relationship between the publicity-mad heroine (Judy Holliday, wonderfully funny when contemplating the merits of one large advertising sign as against six small ones) and her more sober admirer (Jack Lemmon, an actor with a casually distinctive style) was developed with grace and charm. The later episodes, when the girl is taken up by television, featured in an advertising campaign and sent around the country making speeches to the air force, could have done with rather more bite and individuality. They showed off the star and they often entertained, but the promise of the opening scene (Central Park, again) with its affectionately ironic view of the girl obsessed with making a name for herself, was not entirely realised.

(Continued on page 220)



"The Actress." Teresa Wright, Spencer Tracy, Jean Simmons



with Claire Bloom as the Lady Anne

Olivier's

The Coronation of Edward IV (Sir Cedric Hardwicke, centre). Richard III glances at Jane Shore, the king's mistress (Pamela Brown). Extreme right, Buckingham (Sir John Gielgud).





‘Richard III’

Scenes from Sir Laurence
Olivier's new Shakespearean
film





Film Reviews

A STAR IS BORN

Since Judy Garland temporarily deserted the screen, four years or so ago, some of us have been at times a little grudging about even the best musicals. Whatever they had, they hadn't got Judy Garland; and, although Hollywood may have found singers or dancers more expert, no one has been able to match the high-strung vitality, the tensely gay personality that made Miss Garland such a uniquely stimulating performer. Against the odds—for it was surely inviting misfortune to take this tear-jerker of the 'thirties and dress it up with songs and CinemaScope—her comeback picture proves the sort of personal triumph that helps to explain, and justify, the star system.

Fundamentally, *A Star is Born* is an immaculate showcase for a prodigious, a not wholly expected talent. One expected the vivacity and the assurance with which the musical numbers are put across—but not, quite, the extra emotional edge that makes a song like "The Man That Got Away" so electrifying. One expected that tremulous, catch-in-the-voice manner to prove adaptable to the demands of "straight" acting—but not, quite, the jagged, vibrating intensity of the performance. If we are to believe that Vicki Lester (*née* Esther Blodgett) has that elusive, indefinable attribute of star quality, then the actress playing her must positively dazzle us with it. But the special fascination of Judy Garland's playing is the way it somehow contrives to bypass technique: the control seems a little less

than complete, and an emotion comes through, as it were, neat. In this incandescent performance, the actress seems to be playing on her nerves: she cannot but strike at ours.

The showcase itself has been constructed with precision tools. The story, basically, may be pretty tawdry stuff: the great actor, who is also a hopeless alcoholic, discovers a new star, marries her, and then, realising that he has destroyed his own career and is on the way to wrecking hers, walks quietly and despairingly into the sea. But Moss Hart's intelligent and sure-footed script (based on the earlier version by Dorothy Parker, Alan Campbell and Robert Carson) takes every legitimate advantage of its keyed-up theatricality. And the picture of Hollywood, with the monstrously plausible publicity man (Jack Carson), the starlet making the most of her big occasion (Lucy Marlow), the flurried ladies of the publicity department, and the make-up men trying to outfit the new star with a Crawford mouth or a Dietrich eyebrow, is recorded with an incisive, astringent wit. The best films about Hollywood have never been kind; and in showing the pandemonium backstage at a big charity show, the jaded sophistication of Hollywood out to enjoy itself, or the feverish solemnity of an Oscar presentation ceremony, *A Star is Born* goes a little beyond the conventional satire which laughs at the thing it loves.

Grandiose the film certainly is, notably in the whole idea of fitting musical numbers into this harsh and self-pitying account of the disintegration of one star and the rise of another. Not, of course, that the film is in the accepted sense a musical version: although the songs have been brought neatly enough into the story, they do not wholly become a part of it. Their logical justification is that they show Vicki Lester as a particular kind of star, and, with this in mind, the producers have resisted the lure of CinemaScope, the open invitation to pack those barren spaces with lavish sets and crowded chorus numbers. "Born in a Trunk"—an unremarkable song, executed with wonderful feeling and command—leads into a sparkling survey of a born entertainer's career, in which one cannot but conjecture that Judy Garland is giving us something of her own story. For this sequence, Irene Sharaff has designed sets and costumes as stylishly gay as they are simple and uncluttered. In the inventive burlesque of a big production number—an American

in Paris, in China, in Cuba and practically everywhere else—Judy Garland clowns, capers and mimes for James Mason in their living-room. And the blues number, "The Man That Got Away," set in a dimly lit night club and ending with a shot so skilfully composed that it almost makes the CinemaScope screen seem defensible, is staged with an absence of apparatus that reflects a complete and, as it turns out, a wholly justified confidence in the singer.

That the film holds together as it does, achieving so adroit a balance between songs and story, is a tribute to the skill of the director, George Cukor, and to his practised assurance at building a film around a personality. His good taste and good craftsmanship are here at their most unobtrusively distinguished, and he has met the problems of CinemaScope partly by employing a more mobile camera, sharper cutting, than we are used to, partly by taking advantage of the nature of the subject to bring off some sharply dramatic lighting effects, with a single figure spotlighted in the centre of a murky screen. Inevitably, it is in the scenes between James Mason and Judy Garland that CinemaScope proves something of a handicap: their playing builds up a sense of intimacy with which that outsize screen is continually at odds. Mason's performance is finely calculated; he suggests both the decaying charm and the neurotic tension of the character, and his restrained playing steers a clear course through the pitfalls of a part full of opportunities for theatrical showiness or the cheap sentimental effect.

The version of *A Star is Born* shown here, and widely in America, is some thirty minutes shorter than the original. One wouldn't as a rule complain that a hundred and fifty minute film was too short, and even here there survive some passages towards the end which might advantageously be trimmed down. But the lost footage included, as well as two numbers, several early episodes designed to establish a character, to introduce Esther Blodgett, as it were, before the transition to Vicki Lester. The importance of these scenes is suggested by Bosley Crowther's comment that the new version amounts almost to a different (and inferior) film. If this, though, is not quite the picture originally intended, it remains an extravagantly generous display of Hollywood showmanship as its most accomplished. Reverting to a tradition lately somewhat out of fashion, the film magnificently takes its tone from a star personality. And what a personality.

PENELOPE HOUSTON.

THE SEVEN SAMURAI

Akira Kurosawa's brilliant new film is a long episodic reconstruction of an incident in 16th century Japan. A peasant village is harried by brigands; in despair the villagers decide to hire professional soldiers to defend them; after recruiting difficulties, seven are collected; they organise the village's defence and succeed in wiping out the bandits completely. This basically simple plot Kurosawa elaborates in two ways. He intro-

duces a profusion of incidents and subplots—the youngest samurai falling in love with a village girl disguised by her mistrustful father as a boy, the attempts of a wandering, humorous braggart to be accepted by the others as a samurai; and he gives to each of the many characters an intensely differentiated individual personality—the mature, kindly, selfless leader, the unassuming but obsessive professional swordsman, the traditional braggadochio.

In *The Seven Samurai* (Films de France), and in the light it throws back on *Rashomon*, Kurosawa's method and personality emerge clearly. He is, above everything else, an exact psychological observer, a keen analyst of behaviour—in a fundamentally detached way. His handling of the young lovers is typical of this. He notes and traces with precision and truth their first, half-terrified awareness of each other sexually, the growth of mutual attraction, the boy's *gauche* admiration, the girl's aching and almost frantic abandonment; what he fails to do is to convey any feeling for, or identification with, the individuals themselves. He strives for this, he uses other images to heighten their scenes—the flower-covered hillside, the sun filtering through the tops of trees (an echo of its more successful use as an orgasm metaphor in *Rashomon*), the dappled light swarming like insects over them as they lie together in a bamboo hut—but somehow these remain perfunctory, a little cold, lacking in real poetry.

In this it is not unrewarding to compare Kurosawa with Ford—by whom, report has it, he claims to have been influenced. There are many superficial resemblances—the reliance on traditional values, the use of folk ceremonies and rituals, the comic horseplay—to Ford in particular and to the Western in general. The fast, vivid handling of the action sequences, the staccato cutting, the variety of angles, the shooting up through horses rearing in the mud, are all reminiscent of recent films in this genre. But the difference is more revealing. The funeral of the first samurai, killed in a preliminary skirmish, is exactly the sort of scene to which Ford responds, with all his reverence and honour for times past and the community of beliefs and feelings which they embodied. Kurosawa uses the scene in two ways, first as a further observation of the character of the "crazy samurai"—who, in a defiant attempt to satisfy his own feelings of frustration and impotence, raises the flag the dead man had sewn—and secondly, as an effective incident for heightening the narrative tension: the bandits launch their first onslaught during the funeral. One of the love scenes is used in a similar way, and in both cases one feels an ultimate shying-away from any direct, committed emotion—except anger.

Of course, to say Kurosawa is not Ford is critically meaningless; the comparison has value only in so far as it is a way of gauging the film's intentions, and its realisation of them. What made *Rashomon* so unique and impressive was that everything, the subject, the formal structure, the playing, even perhaps the period, allowed for this exterior approach to behaviour. In *The Seven Samurai* Kurosawa is striving for something different, a re-creation, a bringing to life of the past and the people whose story he is telling. Here, for all the surface conviction of period, the perceptive observation, the raging vitality and the magnificent visual style, the film doesn't quite succeed. All the elements are there except the depth and the generosity of life. One feels that each incident is too carefully worked into the texture as a whole. The Donskoi of the *Gorki* trilogy is a much simpler and, in many ways, more ordinary personality; but he achieved, almost without realising it, what Kurosawa labours for. Life itself seems to have taken over from Donskoi, carrying him along on its great stream, but Kurosawa has engineered a stunning aqueduct along which it must flow. Only in his handling of the "crazy samurai" does it occasionally overflow. Toshiro Mifune, gibing at the samurai, waving, in mocking triumph, a fish caught in a stream, and—another Falstaff—bullying his hopeless recruits, brings to his portrayal a reckless and at moments out-of-hand gusto. It is a splendid performance, losing no opportunity, and it only fails to integrate a gratuitously introduced class motivation—he is really a peasant wanting to be a samurai. (The fault here lies with the script rather than the performer.) This is perhaps a momentary and rather glib contemporary analogy out of keeping with the rest.

These ultimate reservations should not, however, prevent us from recognising the film's astonishing qualities. Incident after



Toshiro Mifune in "The Seven Samurai".

incident is created with biting precision for the whole 2½ hour length (the exported version, incidentally, is an hour shorter than the original)—the villagers shunning the samurai on their arrival only to tumble towards them in panic as the alarm is sounded, the capture of a thief and, brilliantly suspended in slow motion, his death, a brief and wonderful sketch of a farmer's wife abducted by the brigands stirring, guilty but sated, in her sleep. On a different level, Kurosawa is a virtuoso exponent of every technique of suspense, surprise, excitement, and in this he gives nothing to his Western masters. Only in his handling of the series of battles is there a hint of monotony. He knows exactly when to hold a silence; how to punch home an extraordinary fact with maximum effect; and his use of the camera is devastating—dazzling close-ups as the village deputation, overawed and desperate in their quest for samurai, scan the crowded street, or wild tracking shots as the drunken Mifune stumbles after his assailant. Visually the film makes a tremendous impression. Kurosawa can combine formal grace with dramatic accuracy, and many scenes create a startling pictorial impact. The raid on the bandits' hideout, when their slaughtered bodies are hurled, naked and haphazard, into the muddied pools outside their burning hut, is not unworthy of the Goya of *Los Desastres*. The final effect, indeed, of *The Seven Samurai* is not unlike that of "Salammbô," a triumph of rage and artifice; and one's final acknowledgment is not of the intrinsic fascination of the material but the wrested skill of the artificer.

TONY RICHARDSON.

ANIMAL FARM

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is an angry satire on Soviet Communism, cast in the form of a simple and moving fable about animals. Driven past endurance, the animals on a mismanaged farm rebel and create an equitable society, governed by the pigs who are the cleverest among them. But the pigs gradually betray all its principles and turn it into a dictatorship, themselves becoming indistinguishable from the human tyrants the animals had overthrown. The John Halas-Joy Batchelor *Animal Farm* (Louis de Rochemont-A.B.-Pathé) is very different. With emphasis shifted from the particular to the general, the satire here is on a dictatorship which sometimes resembles Fascism as much as Communism, and the fable is modified accordingly. The pig dictator's cunning diplomacy with human neighbours is omitted, as are the tame raven's homilies about Sugarcandy Mountain. That the conclusion should be radically altered is inevitable. Orwell ends with the exhausted animals, watching the pigs feasting with their human associates, looking "from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which." Hopeless, the animals did nothing. In this animated cartoon they notice the resemblance during a congress of pigs from far and wide on their farm; and, supported by animals from other farms, they revolt.

In spite of all these changes, the fundamental meaning of book and film is the same. In the film, the poignancy of the two heroic characters has been enhanced; the simple-minded carthorse, who labours prodigiously and loyally for the good of all, and his devoted friend the donkey, the only one never

deceived by the pigs, are very appealing creations. And the scene of the donkey trying vainly to save the horse from the knacker makes a strong emotional impact. Most critics, whatever the politics of their papers, have referred to the book's ending as "sad" and to the film's as "happy." Now, in either case the political implications would not have been so widely accepted if the heroic figures had not succeeded in arousing personal sympathy. The difference between film and book is, finally, in their emphases. In both cases the pigs betray their ideals, but where Orwell's conclusion is that Communism = Capitalism (the hopeless animals do nothing about their plight), the film shows that with intervention from outside this same conclusion may be averted (the animals, with animals from other farms, revolt).

Animal Farm is the first serious and first full-length British cartoon, but its interest goes beyond that. Admittedly the style of drawing is not new; in keeping with Orwell's realism it is representational and therefore reminiscent of Disney, but it has some exciting pictorial effects and the editing is brilliant. Some sequences, like the rebellion and the invasion, are remarkable for the dynamic movement achieved by quick cutting from one striking image to another; and several of the longer scenes, especially those involving the horse and the donkey, are also notable for the animation—which, though technically imperfect, is full of expression and individuality.

Only the pigs, destined to be humanised, talk. Belonging to the outside world, the human beings are the most strongly caricatured. The casting, which is Orwell's, gives the animals symbolic roles, only some of which correspond to genuine animal characteristics, and others conform to the traditional mythology which has penetrated into every language: the "brainless" hens, the "silly" goose and the "sheepish" sheep are the ones who needlessly "confess" treason. (The public, incidentally, conditioned by innumerable cartoon comedies in which cats are savaged for comic effect, seems unable to accept a cat's misfortune as sad; at three different screenings I heard people guffaw when the cat, as one of "the innocent who suffered with the guilty," is killed by the dogs.) But, except for the martial bearing of the pigs, all the animal movements are natural and well studied, and many of them, which is the film's great merit, are impressive as symbolic figures.

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE.

PRINCE OF PLAYERS

Junius Brutus Booth, an English immigrant to America in the early nineteenth century, became a flamboyant and powerful tragedian in the style of Kean, whom he so greatly admired. His family had a history of alcoholism and temporary insanity, by both of which he was afflicted, in middle life, to an acute degree. Of his six children (the film acknowledges only three), Edwin became an equally famous actor, John Wilkes, after an unsuccessful stage career, espoused the Southern cause as a spy in the Civil War and was Lincoln's assassin, and Asia was a dutiful daughter and sister, somewhat buffeted by events. The family shown in the film reminds one occasionally of the Brontës—the reckless John Wilkes, like Bramwell, driving himself obstinately to perdition, Edwin inclined, like Emily, to rush out wildly into the night, and Asia, like Charlotte, patiently worrying, administering and bearing burdens.

Prince of Players (Fox) limits itself, by some juggling with actual events, to Edwin's early life—we see him first as a boy, trailing round theatres with his violent father, and we leave him, aged presumably about 30, successfully defying a mob (during the frenzied demonstrations against actors that occurred after John Wilkes shot Lincoln) in a New York theatre—and devotes much time to the story of his marriage. He meets his wife, Mary Devlin, in a repertory company; her faith and devotion overcome his drinking bouts and fears of inherited insanity, but she develops consumption and dies after seven or eight years, leaving a void in his life which is symbolised in succeeding reels by the empty theatre box she used always to occupy at his first nights. . . . (Actually she died in 1881, when Edwin was 49.) This, with generous excerpts from *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, accounts for most of the footage. A pity; there is much interesting material in Edwin's life that the script hardly touches—a perfunctorily sketched episode dismisses the intriguing tours of the West, first with his father, then on his own, in which Shakespeare

"*Animal Farm*": triumph of the Pig.





Fritz Lang's "Human Desire." Gloria Grahame, Glenn Ford.

was performed to enthusiastic settlers in remote townships, and the story stops before Edwin's second visit to London, when he and Irving alternated Othello and Iago in the same production, with Ellen Terry as Desdemona.

This is not, of course, a "serious" biography—in spite of its subject, which embraces so much that is most fascinating in the American and English nineteenth century theatre—but a conventionally romanticised impression of a young man who happened to be a famous actor. (Was the intention something similar to that of *Young Mr. Lincoln*? There is a distinct parallel in the ending which leaves Edwin at the climactic threshold of his career, the memory of a dead love still with him.) But for all the opportunities missed, for all Philip Dunne's rather cumbrous and laboured handling, which lets the episodes fall into a series of loose CinemaScope *tableaux*, for all the cliché situations and deliberately fustian quality of Moss Hart's dialogue, which never avoids a facile theatrical allusion—"I prefer to play another role," says John Wilkes darkly, when his brother tries to dissuade him from traitorous activities with an offer of a joint tour—and for all the long Victorian sentimentality of the dying wife, there is something not unattractive about *Prince of Players*. In general, this is because it is honestly conventional; and its solid old-fashioned atmosphere, reminiscent of those "dignified" prestige productions of the 30's, which gives it, in its field, a kind of academic quality, is pleasantly removed from current pretensions.

In particular, of course, the film's interest lies in its star. Richard Burton is an exceptionally gifted young actor, with a natural integrity, a compelling presence, and a very individual style that contains a brooding concentration and a relaxed confidence; and a constant suggestion of passion in reserve, passion that does not often break directly through. Temperamentally, though he is more articulate, he sometimes suggests affinities with Brando, but he has not yet found (in the cinema, at any rate) equivalent opportunities. In most of his Hollywood films he has played on "personality" and pushed his style to the verge of mannerism; in *Prince of Players* there is again, inevitably, an over-emphasis on "personality," because the material for a genuine characterisation does not exist and the succession of scenes from Shakespeare obviously involves more of a virtuoso display than a sustained performance. As an exercise, though, it is remarkable. Whenever the script offers an opportunity for real dramatic playing, he takes it alertly: the

early moments with his father (a vivid and confident piece of portraiture by Raymond Massey), which he subtly shades to suggest the half respectful, half protective relationship that has grown up between them, his bleary gradual awareness of Mary Devlin, as he meets her for the first time and they go into an impromptu rehearsal (meaningfully ambiguous, of course) of the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, and his masterly indifference to the rabble-rousers in the theatre at the end. In the Shakespeare sequences, his *Richard III* is a brilliant piece of pastiche Olivier, but his *Hamlet* is less assured—it is probably not his part—except for the closet scene which, with a perceptive and original interpretation of Gertrude by Eva Le Gallienne, makes an unexpectedly strong impact.

With all this, one cannot help speculating—though the film is obviously not the kind that intends one to—on how truthful (if truthful at all) a picture we are given of Edwin Booth's acting style. Henry James compared him to Irving, for whom he had little liking ("a talent not of a kind to provoke enthusiasm. . . . It strikes me as the acting of a very superior amateur . . . grappling in deliberate and conscientious manner with a series of great tragic points"); Edwin, who had "several points in common" with Irving, he considered "nearer a man of genius" but less "comfortable" to see. Laurence Irving, in his biography of Henry Irving, suggests this was because James, infatuated with the Comédie Française style, was "bewildered by Irving's technique (or, as he thought, lack of it)." James' comparison of Irving and Edwin Booth refers presumably to their general temperament rather than to their styles, since Irving was regarded (until his later years) as a modernist in the theatre, and an advocate of "production," while Edwin inherited a traditional declamatory style and a disinterest in settings from his father. Certainly Edwin was a less handsome and romantic figure than the one presented here, and one suspects that he was not the kind of actor to indulge in the spectacular duel with Laertes, and that his *Richard III* in California was less intimate and sophisticated. One of the last great old-fashioned players, in fact, is here impersonated by an actor whose style is emphatically part of that new, impressive and quite contrary tradition evolved by a handful of outstanding young actors of his generation.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

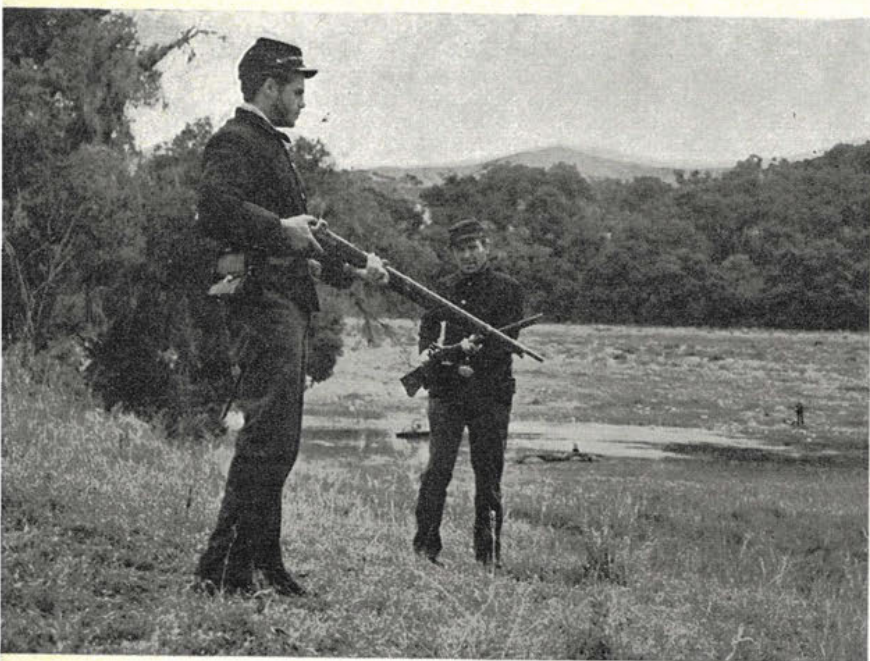
A TIME OUT OF WAR

A human activity as complex in its causes, as various in its effects, as ultimately absurd, and yet as seemingly inevitable as war—there is no end to the variety of ways in which it may be treated by the artist. Perhaps one of the reasons for the great appeal of *A Time Out of War*, recently shown at the National Film Theatre, is that its attitude reflects so faithfully that of a great many of us at the moment. War is in the air, universally condemned yet universally accepted; life remains to be lived, to be enjoyed, pleasures lie all about us; and yet the laws of fraternal hatred and mutual destruction continue to impose themselves, like some mysterious, purposeless necessity.

The soldiers of *A Time Out of War* accept this necessity without question; but they respond instinctively to the message of peace which is in the sky, the river and the sunlit valley. They propose their truce. Alas—it does not seem abominable to them that at the end of those few hours of friendship they should return to shooting at each other. Thus the futility of war is sadly demonstrated.

For a half hour film that obviously had to be made with minimal resources, Denis Sanders—a young U.C.L.A. graduate with some documentaries to his credit—has taken a story that is in many respects ideally suitable: only one setting, and that an exterior one; only three actors; few effects and little dialogue. At the same time this very simplicity makes the choice a daring one. There is nothing here for inexperience to shelter behind. Everything depends on consistency of mood, truth and suggestiveness of atmosphere. This is the kind of film in which technique becomes of the greatest importance; because technique makes style, and style makes poetry, and the impact of this episode must be poetic.

It is a tribute to the integrity of conception and execution in *A Time Out of War* that it achieves its effect, in spite of certain faults of technique, errors of style. The exposition is not as lucid as it might be; and some of the playing is a little inexperienced. Sanders' command of rhythm is not yet quite certain, and where the tempo of the film should be elegiac, calmly flowing, it is inclined to hesitate. Most important, there



"A Time out of War".

is a not always perfect balance between formality and naturalism—certain images rather over-composed, eye-lines unhappily cheated in order to achieve a particular framing. In this kind of situation, it is more important that we should be convinced of the absolute truth of what is happening on the screen, than that we should be conscious of a balancing, ordering eye at work through the viewfinder.

Yet the film is poetic. It is the weaknesses that are superficial, not the intention; and the restrained comment of the episode is felt at the end to have a surprising power. The quietly flowing river; the men chatting, lying in the sun, fishing; the birds singing; the sudden ugliness of the dead soldier in the river—these add up to a solemn little elegy, with a purity of feeling, a distinct individuality of approach, that is rare, touchingly dignified.

LINDSAY ANDERSON.

THE END OF THE AFFAIR

The writer through whose eyes the story is told in Graham Greene's novel has one foot a little shorter than the other, the result of an accident in childhood. In the film (*Columbia*), his imperceptible limp is honourably due to a war wound. His code of honour has also been given a brush-up. When he meets his mistress at her house in the presence of her husband, his distaste for the situation is heavily underlined. Such considerations and revisions as these serve to edulcorate the character and his jagged jealousy, violent enough to prompt the services of a private investigator to spy on his mistress after their affair is over. The character's emotional intensity is stated in a literary rather than a dramatic mode, and it is thus not entirely Van Johnson's fault that his visual realisation of it is no more than a series of anguished *moues*, clear for all to see, including those who plainly should not.

The wartime love affair itself, which makes up the first part of the film, also fails to create the right quality. It is not helped by the music, which illustrates most of it with a lushly tragic piano concerto. But for the most part Deborah Kerr plays with great tact and skill. In the narration of her diary, however, her voice is often too smoothly righteous, and when, during the air raid, she makes her anguished promise to renounce her lover should his life be spared, she lacks the necessary starkness. But here again, the script (by Lenore Coffee) is much to blame for its over-eloquent "literary" style.

The latter part of the film deals with the spiritual responsibility incurred by the girl's appeal to God, and the possibility that her lover's emergence unharmed from the debris may be the result of it. The drama of this conflict (the decision to accept or reject the existence of God) has not been wrested from the pages of the novel. The refinements of inner struggle sound glib and pretentious when expressed in such

typical lines as "*I only want your Love, He wants your Life*"; and the conversion to Catholicism seems arbitrary, unless an undue ironic burden is laid on the statement volunteered after a couple of drinks by the girl's mother—that, unknown to anyone, she had caused her daughter to be furtively baptised in the Catholic faith as a private revenge on her husband.

The film is stylishly directed by Edward Dmytryk, but with a wearying singleness of pace, due more, perhaps, to "reverence" than to real understanding. The minor characters are, without exception, thinly conceived, and the consciously comic chirpiness of John Mills' dedicated sleuth is a grave miscalculation of tone. His open invitation to see the funny side of things is sure of a particularly stony reception in the Greene world, where inner states are simmering with torture and unrest, and where the acquisition of faith merely changes the quality, not the degree, of the wretchedness.

DEREK PROUSE.

IN BRIEF

HUMAN DESIRE (*Columbia*.) Of course one approaches this film with suspicion, remembering the usual fate of French stories remade in Hollywood studios. But even if Fritz Lang has not managed to equal Renoir's version of *La Bête Humaine*, he is far from having sunk to those depths which Litvak plumbed with his parody of *Le Jour se Lève*. *Human Desire* is an odd film, more persuasively transplanted than Lang's previous attempt at a Zola-Renoir story (*Scarlet Street*), even if ultimately the proper conclusions of the story are shirked.

The American railroad setting is quite acceptable (diesels instead of steam trains, but still powerful); and some of the script changes are even welcome. In relieving the engine-driving hero of his congenital sadistic mania, Alfred Hayes has given the story a sharper focus. The design is now clearer and simpler: the seduction and destruction of the honest driver, *homme moyen sensuel*, by the feline tramp who has become the unwilling accomplice of her husband in the murder of her wealthy lover. There is something old-fashioned in the situation, but it remains a valid one, and one senses its appeal to Lang's harsh, Germanic temperament.

This harshness is apparent in the film. There is a welcome lack of gloss about it. The little town at the end of the line is a grey place. And the relationships, for at least the first half of the story, have an interestingly European quality to them—a complication of motive and reaction that seems strange in a Hollywood film of today. The driver (played by Glenn Ford with his usual sensitivity and reserve) is attracted by the well-developed, all-American teen-ager; but more deeply, carnally fascinated by the sluttish young wife of a fellow-railwayman. And this is Gloria Grahame, performing with the same virtuosity she displayed in *The Big Heat*, with a frank, animal sexuality, and a pervasive suggestion of viciousness. All this is excellent.

Inevitably, pressures of commercialism and production codes being what they are, the film collapses. Returning from the midnight sortie in which he has pursued the drunken husband across the railway yard, with intent to kill, the lover has to confess: "*I couldn't do it. . .*" The actor can't believe it; we can't believe it; and Lang hardly tries to convince us. The good parts of the film are good enough to make one regret its final disintegration.—Lindsay Anderson.

CARMEN JONES (*Fox: CinemaScope*.) Hearing *Carmen* at the opera, I could never believe in its melodramatic libretto about a wanton who comes to a bad end at the hands of her discarded lover; it had accumulated too many outdated conventions, and was on the verge of vulgar artificiality. But, knowing the dangerous magic of *flamencos*, I could readily accept the original romantic reality of Merimee's story. I can as readily accept *Carmen Jones*, the film of the musical play that Oscar Hammerstein in 1944 founded on Bizet's opera, above all because the story, transferred from 19th century Spain to a negro community in modern America, is brought to life by people who have the temperament to conjure forth magic and express passions in the spirit of the original. With lyrics composed in the traditional negro idiom—which modernises the effect of certain melodies without vulgarising the impact of the music—and production conforming to current conventions, the players are free to act in the simple style natural to them. And they have invested the film with ardent conviction, wit and tremendous brio, thus proving the aptness of Hammerstein's bold idea.

They have done this, what is more, in spite of not a few defects in Otto Preminger's direction and production, with its unnecessary indulgence in close-ups of open-mouthed singers, unimaginative treatment of stock situations like the lovers' first quarrel, and a relapse into staginess at the tragic end. It is the characters who command our attention throughout. As Carmen Jones, the parachute factory girl, Dorothy Dandridge is a perfect counterpart of the wild and fickle gipsy enchantress from a Spanish cigarette factory; she has the fire, the triumphant pride, all the fatal charm to make you believe in her power over men. And Harry Belafonte as the Air Force pilot Joe gives a gripping portrayal of a jilted lover's rage and torment. There is outstanding wit in Pearl Bailey's good-time Frankie, and pathos in Olga James' Cindy Lou, the girl faithfully in love with Joe. The Spanish toreador becomes Husky the champion boxer, a character less arrogant and more solid than the original, to which Joe Adams brings a fine irony. These players—and the voices of Marilyn Horne, Le Vern Hutcherson and Marvin Hayes, who sing for Carmen, Joe and Husky—bring a marvellous vitality to the most original, if not wholly successful, adaptation I have seen on the screen.—*Catherine de la Roche*.

GEMBAKU NO KO *Children of Hiroshima* (Contemporary Films). This 3-year-old Japanese film, ignored at the Cannes Festival in 1953 but highly praised in Paris, is a sincere and thoughtful attempt to come to dramatic terms with a subject of horrifying urgency. Though its responses are direct and genuine, however, it is not a very imaginative or, in itself, memorable work. The dramatic framework is a good one; the young schoolmistress, who returns to Hiroshima seven years after the fall of the bomb to visit a few friends who survived the

catastrophe, finds its shadow still implicitly cast over everything. A friend of her youth has now married but can never bear children, a former pupil is slowly dying of the "illness," and an old man, once a servant in her parents' household, lives blind and maimed, in terrible squalor, with his little grandson. Somehow, happiness and hope have gone out of the air—these people are just living, knowing they must die or even wanting to die, or knowing their lives will always be incomplete.

The mood is gentle and deliberately restrained. Behind the individual situations, the young director, Kaneto Shindo, aims to sketch in the general related patterns of everyday life in a broken city, and each thread leads back, directly or indirectly, to August 6th, 1945. This is a city of orphans, of bereavements, of the "illness." Nothing—except a formalised sequence, set to choral music, evoking the nightmare of the bomb itself, a sunflower instantaneously scorched and withered, bodies naked and mutilated, the swelling pillar of smoke, all of which stands out from the rest as a too conscious set-piece—is overstressed. Yet what is lacking is the true personal sensibility that might have made the film a work of art instead of an honourable attempt at one.

The film has not, in fact, found a style; and its description of personal lives hovers uneasily on the edge of banality, of a sentiment controlled yet intrinsically too facile. It is not that one misses the fine formal qualities of other Japanese films recently shown here, for the roughness suits the subject well enough—except that it remains, simply, roughness and nothing more. One misses the element of poetry, of emotion finely kindled, that is there, for instance, in *A Time out of War*. Modesty, tact, evidence of sadness, of pity, of quiet moral indignation—these do not add up to a communication of total experience, definite vision.—*James Morgan*.

"Carmen Jones". Dorothy Dandridge, Harry Belafonte.



SO THIS IS PARIS (Universal-International). This Technicolor musical, not Press shown, is an unusually attractive entertainment picture. Directed by Richard Quine, whose melodramas (*Drive a Crooked Road*, *Pushover*) have been previously reviewed, it agreeably displays the lighter side of his strong, quizzical talent. The material is thin and conventional enough; three girl-hungry U.S. sailors on leave in Paris prowl the city for *mesdemoiselles*, find some, quarrel a bit over the share-out, put on a charity show for a group of destitute orphans, and return triumphantly to their ship, with their new partners (now sorted) eagerly promising to wait. Crisply and confidently paced, acted with charm and gaiety by nearly everyone concerned, and most adroitly filled out with inventive, laconic "business" and detail, *So This is Paris* elicits the same keen, detached, sharply ironic response that its director brought to the two preceding films. It is a genuinely personal achievement.

The (potentially unappetising) comedy of the sex-mad sailors becomes, in Quine's hands, genuinely funny, invested with a kind of acid good nature and never over-stressed. The tiresome orphan *motif* is carefully smoothed over—impatiently so at the end, with the result that an already unstable plot virtually collapses. So flimsy is its structure, though, that scarcely a thud is heard. Tony Curtis, Gene Nelson and Paul Gilbert play and perform together with engaging high spirits and a persuasively natural relaxation; Corinne Calvet amuses as a nitwit French heiress. The choreography (by Gene Nelson and Lee Scott) has verve, and the songs themselves—"Just wait 'til Paris sees us," "A Dame's a Dame," "If you Want to be Famous"—are most enjoyable.

In form the film resembles an earlier musical directed by Quine, *All Ashore* (Columbia, 1952), as both are derived, of course, from *On the Town*. This little "B" picture, recently reissued, was clearly shot in a few days; the settings and the colour look raw, the situations go soft and tedious halfway through, but the early sequences carry a recognisable impact. Three girl-chasing sailors let loose on Catalina this time, with Mickey Rooney in good form as the dupe of the party, everyone's fall guy—from this some merciless, biting humour is extracted, and one satirical number, "Buddy Boy," is highly entertaining. At first the incisive direction, taking everything at breakneck speed, works well; but it is soon visibly cruder and less resourceful than in *So This is Paris*, and towards the end one feels the pace reflects only a desire to get the whole thing over as soon as possible. The rest of the cast, Ray McDonald excepted, has little charm or talent. As an example of an adventurous director beginning to exercise his abilities, though, and for its flashes of authentic comedy, *All Ashore* has its rewards.—Gavin Lambert.

THE LONG GRAY LINE (Columbia: CinemaScope). The life story of Sergeant Marty Maher, a young Irish immigrant who came to West Point as a waiter some 50 years ago, took the oath, married a lively colleen, became athletic trainer and Dutch uncle to generations of cadets through two world wars, was saved from retirement by a personal appeal to President Eisenhower (whom, along with Omar Bradley and James Van Fleet, he had seen graduate), and acclaimed as a living embodiment of tradition by a special massed parade—at which, indomitably brushing away a tear, we leave him taking the salute.

John Ford has directed this long patriotic memoir (scripted by Edward Hope from Maher's autobiography) with a great deal of care, skill and recognisably personal detail. The Irish element, particularly the courtship of Marty and Mary O'Donnell (Tyrone Power and Maureen O'Hara), is stuffed with references to *The Quiet Man*, and the emphasis on military tradition, on service and dedication, recalls *They Were Expendable*. But the material is trite, and its celebration of the codes and ideals of West Point vexatiously combines sentimentality, cosiness and religious awe; dispensing it with a seasoned entertainer's shrewdness, Ford now borrows from himself in the most dubious of causes, cheapening and coarsening elements of some of his finest work with consummate, apparently shameless ease. The themes of military ritual, service humour, continuity of human loyalty and human sacrifice, have been peculiarly his own—to say nothing of the shennanigans—and it is dismal to watch this confident self-travesty. There is an energetic but dull cast, though Maureen O'Hara, in difficult circumstances, retains her charm.—Gavin Lambert.

THE COLDITZ STORY (British Lion). Guy Hamilton, one of the younger British film-makers, gained his experience as assistant director on several important productions, including a number by Carol Reed and John Huston's *The African Queen*. Since 1952, Hamilton has himself directed four films: *The Ringer* and *An Inspector Calls* (two literary adaptations), *The Intruder* (a study of the difficulties of an ex-Serviceman who takes to crime, which was uneven and sometimes snobbish in treatment, but contained some freshly handled scenes and several good performances), and, more recently, *The Colditz Story*. Although none of these films has indicated the presence of any marked individual talent, they have all been made with unobtrusive competence, *The Colditz Story*, in particular, being well paced and edited in a manner slightly reminiscent of Carol Reed. The film is an adaptation by Hamilton and the producer, Ivan Foxwell, of episodes from P. R. Reid's account of his experiences in the heavily guarded Colditz Castle, where veteran "escapees" of the Second World War were housed. The script gives the impression that p.o.w. life consisted almost entirely of daring and often successful escape attempts; and, not for the first time, it implies that the war and imprisonment generally were rather jolly adventures. There are no heartaches here; every crisis can be shrugged off with a joke, and the officers' code of conduct reigns supreme. This attitude does not seriously affect the film's several effectively staged set pieces (including the spectacular jump of the Frenchman, La Tour, over the barbed wire, and the short-lived escape by the Englishman, Winslow, in a pile of camp bedding), but the lack of emotional depth makes itself felt in the story's one tragic incident. "Mac" McGill (Christopher Rhodes), a tough, well-meaning, somewhat excitable Scotsman, is killed in an unsuccessful escape attempt, and, although the event is later discussed by the senior British officers (Eric Portman and John Mills), there is nowhere any direct expression of sorrow or feeling of loss at his passing. The "other side," represented by the German guards, are treated in a generally good-humoured manner: clearly they never understood the "mad" English. The playing of the all-male cast is well integrated within the conventions of the script, and the characterisation is cheerful and breezy in the customary British service tradition.—John Gillett.

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS (G.F.D.). Filmed during Armand Denis' recent expedition to Australia, *Under the Southern Cross* contains many interesting things. It shows some of the rare animals, such as the duckbilled platypus, which belong exclusively to this continent; caves with prehistoric drawings; the wild red dust area and its various inhabitants, from the aborigines to the big, honey-storing ants they eat. As in *Below the Sahara*, Denis' earlier film, the colour photography is excellent. Casual in design, like most travelogues, neither of these films is, or claims to be, either a comprehensive survey or an artist's impression. But both have pretensions which, not being entirely justified, should not pass unnoticed.

Firstly, both films emphasise that nobody carries guns on Denis' expeditions—they hunt only with cameras. Nevertheless, ostensibly as a sideline, they trap animals and, as if by chance, join in hunts arranged by others: a gorilla hunt in the first, spearing of wallabies in the second. Again, several episodes in both films are presented as spontaneous, but look staged or restaged (how otherwise did the colour camera happen to be set up?). In the African film, a leopard attacks a negro, and in the Australian one a sick aboriginal child is trustingly brought to the explorers' camp for treatment.

No doubt these incidents are included for additional "entertainment value," just as the sequences of a rodeo, of a wild pig being netted, of crocodiles being captured, and the training of frightened-looking cheetahs with bait to catch gazelles, are rather irrelevantly introduced for further excitement. But in effect they tend to defeat their own ends. As a result of the more violent scenes, others designed to demonstrate a fondness for animals on the part of Armand Denis and his wife Michaela appear unconvincing. The authority of the films is diminished. Finally, in *Under the Southern Cross*, the insistent boosting in E. V. H. Emmett's commentary of Michaela Denis as a woman with an "unfailing gift" and an "unerring instinct" with children and animals brings an embarrassing note of complacency. Armand Denis' films would acquire integrity, and more interest, if he relinquished the pretensions and the superficial thrills, and treated the fascinating and diverse material he discovers as an explorer in a more creative way.—Catherine de la Roche.

People of Talent—1

Maria Casarès

A GREAT actress. If the verdict seems premature on the evidence of her films alone, those fortunate enough to have seen her on the Paris stage will not question it. More than this; she is probably the greatest actress of her generation. Twelve years have passed since her revelation in "Deirdre of the Sorrows," and since that time she has created some twenty roles in the theatre (in Camus' "Le Malentendu" and "Les Justes," in Anouilh's "Roméo et Jeannette," in Péguy's "Jeanne d'Arc" and, currently, as Lady Macbeth in Jean Vilar's production at the Théâtre National Populaire), and half that number in the cinema (many of them, alas, unworthy). In October 1939, a refugee in Paris, daughter of an exiled member of the Spanish Republican Government, she was brought to the Conservatoire; and her professor there, Dussane, remembering one of her early auditions, describes a haggard, wild-haired, green-eyed girl doing a scene from "Les Corbeaux"—"in tears—in real tears—sobbing: 'Je suis une fille perdue . . . une fille perdue. . . .'"

The tears are still real. Two years ago, at the Comédie-Française, she created what one can only describe as a definitive portrait of the step-daughter in Pirandello's "Six Characters in Search of an Author"; this was acting at a pitch of high tension, yet controlled by a rigorous discipline. The nervous, electric striving to communicate first an existence, then the predicament of that existence, the tormented exultation of playing out its drama—it is seldom one sees passion of this intensity and purity incarnate on the stage, and the experience remains something to be referred to again and again.

The Parisian public was drawn to the Pirandello play partly, at least, by Maria Casarès' success on the screen in *Orphée*, one of her two finest roles in the cinema. Hélène in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* and the Death of Orpheus complement, in some degree, each other. It is interesting that neither is a "realistic" portrayal; the intellectual *femme fatale* in Robert Bresson's remote and formalised world, the princess of the Shades in Cocteau's poetic fantasy, are both creations deliberately "larger than life," mysterious, troubled and passionate figures rather than characters. Both are, above all, triumphs of "presence" in parts to which this extra dimension of personality was essential. It was not for nothing that a French critic described her style as "epic," and that Denis Marion celebrated her revelation in the cinema as "an actress's conquest of her true face," a face of strange, inimitable beauty and expressiveness.

Yet the cinema has offered her little. In her first film, *Les Enfants du Paradis*, she had uneasily to subdue all that was most individual for an unsuitable, passive role, and in her most concentrated period of film work, 1946-50



(in which she made seven films), only one, apart from *Orphée*, offered her anything of quality. This was the blatant, efficiently mounted romantic adventure that Christian-Jaque extracted from *La Chartreuse de Parme*, in which her Sanseverina, gentle but proud and aristocratic, was the one recognisably Stendhalian character. In the others—*Roger-la-Honte*, *La Septième Porte*, *Bagarres*, etc.—she had faintly exotic *femme fatale* parts. Probably she prefers the stage; the conditions of film acting, she has remarked, do not for her allow the same degree of concentration, of "living with" the character—"the work is too broken up, too passive also." Yet she has seldom rejected a film part, and if the cinema continues to offer her little there is so much that she can offer it.

The performances in *Les Dames* and *Orphée* retain, in these days of so much smooth and level competence, something of the quality of a visitation; and their presence remains, haunting our dissatisfactions and our hopes. Now 32, Maria Casarès is approaching the height of her powers. This is the moment for the cinema—when what she has so far given it by no means represents the fullness of her talent—to call her back, and record them.

FILMS OF MARIA CASARES. 1944, *Les Enfants du Paradis* (Carné). 1945, *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (Bresson), *Roger-la-Honte* (Cayatte). 1946, *La Revanche de Roger-la-Honte* (Cayatte), *La Septième Porte* (Zwobada), *L'Amour autour de la Maison* (le Hérain). 1947, *La Chartreuse de Parme* (Christian-Jaque). 1948, *Bagarres* (Calef). 1949, *L'Homme qui revient de loin* (Castanier). 1950, *Orphée* (Cocteau), *Ombre et Lumière* (Calef).

1954 in Japan

MASAYOSHI IWABUTCHI

THE GENERAL SITUATION

IN 1954, Japan produced 373 feature films. This large total was the result of mass production, particularly by the Toei Company, now averaging two films a week, and has been swelled by the output from the Nikkatsu Company, the oldest in Japan, originally established in 1912 and now producing films on its own account again. During the war it was amalgamated with the Daiei Company, but immediately afterwards it split off and regained its interests in both cinemas and theatres as a result of reorganisation.

Before the war, Nikkatsu was responsible for many excellent films, but in 1954 its productions were not so good. Only *Kuroi Ushio* (*The Black Tide*) is really noteworthy; it is based on the story of a news reporter who sought to uncover the truth in a contemporary *cause célèbre*, the Shimoyama case. *The Black Tide* is the second film of the actor-director Satoru Yamamura, whose *Kanikosen* (*The Cannery Boat*) was awarded a prize at the 8th International Film Festival at Karlovy Vary.

The Cannery Boat continued the trend of basing films on works by famous authors. Like *Nigorie* (*Squalor*) and *Gan* (*The Wild Goose*), it belongs to the naturalist school of film-making, though Yamamura's film inclines more than somewhat towards socialist realism. The films of Kenji Mizoguchi, one of the most famous of Japanese directors, who began work in the late 20's, are also taken from literary sources: *Sansho Dayu* (*The Bailiff Sansho*), *Ugetsu Monogetari* and *Chikamatsu Monogetari*. All are formalist period pieces, set in the medieval past, and produced by Daiei. Mizoguchi's films are highly valued in Japan, and have also been great successes. His latest, *Tales from Chikamatsu*, is adapted from a tragedy by that author, who is to us what Shakespeare is to the English.

A different kind of trend, and a dangerous one, also appeared in Japanese cinema during 1954. This was a series of films designed to overcome public resistance to



Kazuo Hasegawa and Kyoko Kagawa in Mizoguchi's new costume film, "Tales from Chikamatsu".

the idea of rearmament; all of them came from the big companies dominating Japanese production. *Kamikaze Tokkotai* (*Kamikaze Suicide Pilots*) and *Nippon Yaburezu* (*Japan is Undeclared*) are typical. A third, *Ningen Gyorai Kaiten* (*A Human Torpedo called Kaiten*), was originally intended by the producers, Shin-Toho, to be militarist, but while shooting was in progress they suddenly ordered the sentiments in the film to be reversed.

The balance was at least held, however, by a series of anti-militarist films, produced by independents, of which *Hi No Hate* (*Sunset*) was the most notable in 1954.

Another cycle, again sustained by the major companies like Toei and Shin-Toho, has popularised fantasy films. *Fuefuki Doji* (*A Flute-Playing Boy*) and *Mikazuki Doji* (*Boy of the New Moon*) are characteristic of the type usually referred to as "Magic." Producers find them exceptionally profitable, as many of them are adapted for radio, where they become equally popular on children's programmes. All this was started in the first place by the success of fantasy picture-books.

A new development in 1954 was that screen stars began to form their own professional associations. Madoka Group, for example, was formed by Shuji Sano, Keiji

Sada and others, and the Ninjin Club by a number of young actresses. The object of these is to encourage independent producers; while contracted solely to the big companies, these actors were dominated by commercial considerations, but now they have managed to free themselves for more experimental work. The results of this can be seen in films like *Nigorie* and *Kuroi Ushio*.

The output of colour films is restricted by high production costs; at present, only the large companies can afford colour. Our own process is called Fujicolor, and was developed by the largest film stock manufacturer, Fuji Film Industry. Interesting results have been achieved on *Jigokumon* (*Gate of Hell*) and *Konjiki Yasha* (*Demon of Gold*), made last year on imported Eastmancolor stock, but our technicians were not then fully acquainted with its characteristics. The critics found the content of these two films of little interest, though *Gate of Hell* won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Festival. Teinosuke Kinugasa is another distinguished director who, like Mizoguchi, began work in the silent period and has made a number of period pieces, but *Gate of Hell* is considered in Japan as one of his worst films. When the news of the Cannes award was reported, it is said that Kinugasa could hardly believe it. Once again, the difference in tastes between European and Japanese audiences was underlined.

FEATURE FILMS

One of the great popular successes of 1954 was the romantic and somewhat sentimental *Kimi No Nawa* (*Always in my Heart*), directed by H. Oba, a three-part story based on a successful radio play. It was produced by Shochiku, which had other and more interesting successes during the year, notably *Onna No Sono* (*The Eternal Generation*) and *Nijushi No Hitomi* (*They Were Twelve*), both made by Keinosuke Kinoshita. The first—from an original story by Tomoji Abe, one of Japan's foremost authors, who recently visited England as representative of the Japanese P.E.N. Club and is now chairman of the Japanese Congress of Intellectuals—is set in a girls' college, and deals with the tensions arising between students and their feudal-minded tutors. The human



Films of contemporary realism. "The Cannery Boat"; the foreman (Mikiso Harata) faces a mutinous crew.

feeling of the direction uses this dramatic situation to point more widely the thoughts and emotions of the younger generation in search of itself and of freedom. The film was very well received by young people in Japan. *They Were Twelve*, from an original story by the woman writer Sakae Tsuboi, is a study of a young woman teacher (played by Hideko Takamine) in a primary school. She has grown up in a peaceful island village with her pupils, but within a short time the war comes; some of the boys die on the battlefield, and her husband is killed. She is forced to leave the school because she is a pacifist, but returns there after the war. In this equally humane film, the pacifist theme is clearly felt both by author and director, and it has also had a wide success. It is interesting, by the way, that Kinoshita is one of the few independent-minded directors to remain at a big studio and succeed in making the kind of films he wants to there.

They Were Twelve is the best Japanese film of 1954. It won the Blue Ribbon prize from Tokyo film journalists, and Hideko Takamine was also awarded the prize for the best actress. It again won first prize at the Arts Festival, organised by the Ministry of Education, in which all the major companies participated, Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* and *Chikamatsu* being the runners-up.

Mizoguchi's films (which have been well received at European festivals) express similar human sympathies, though in a very different way. Set in the past, his films are rich in formal beauty and atmosphere, but his critical attitude towards war can be seen in *Ugetsu*, and the theme of liberation of slaves is important in *Sansho Dayu*. These ideas come through obliquely, but they are none the less apparent. Some years ago, in *Elegy of Osaka* and *Sisters of Gion*, he portrayed the wretched existence of geisha girls, white slaves at the mercy of poverty, and these two films are full of direct human protest. His latest, *Tales from Chikamatsu*, is a love-story, and the lovers,



A slum scene from "Cape Ashizuri".



Kinoshita's "The Eternal Generation," set in a women's college.

played by Kazuo Hasegawa and Kyoko Kagawa, find themselves engaged in a struggle with the feudal social system of the middle ages. These films, I must stress, may be as easily understood by European audiences as that curiosity, *Rashomon*, and for us in Japan they are also more valuable.

Akira Kurosawa, the director of *Rashomon*, has most recently made *The Seven Samurai*, much enjoyed by audiences in Japan for its reproduction of Western-style action. Some critics attacked the film but failed to understand its important message; the implication throughout this story of a group of samurai who save a peasant village from bandits is that unity is necessary for any kind of progress.

Another famous veteran director, Heinosuke Gosho, well known for his *Four Chimneys* and *Hotel at Osaka*, made two films in 1954: *Ai To Shi No Tanimi* (*Valley Between Love and Death*) and *Niwatori Wa Futatabi Naku* (*The Cock Crows Again*), both studies of contemporary life. They were not widely liked, and were also accused of existentialist tendencies.

The militarist film: "Human Torpedo 'Kaiten'".

INDEPENDENTS

Most of the films made by independent directors were concerned with social problems. *Nigorie* (*Squalor*), directed by Tadashi Imai, is based on three novels by Ichiyo Higuchi, a woman writer whose brilliant works were very popular some 50 years ago. One episode deals with the life of prostitutes, another with a marriage crisis, centred on the feudal position of a Japanese wife. *Taiyo No Nai Machi* (*Streets Without the Sun*) is based on a well-known working-class novel by Tokunaga, which describes the strike at the Kyodo Printing Works in Tokyo in 1926. *A Village Light* touches upon some of the problems of education in country districts; and *The Younger Generation*, directed by Kosaburo Yoshimura, is a study of today's young people in white-collar jobs. This veteran director also made another film about young people, this time set in the slums, *Cape Ashizuri*, which is based on three stories by a distinguished contemporary writer, Torahiko Tamiya. And the director of *Children of Hiroshima*, Kaneto Shindo, has also made a new film of social protest, *The Drain*. This study of a slum girl who finally goes mad and is shot by the police is confusing in its intentions; it has been said that the idea was to show how an intrinsically good girl was oppressed by the evil of the world, and also to express the aspirations of poor people in a manner similar to *Miracolo a Milano*. It seemed to me, when I saw the film, that the situation resembled Gorky's *Lower Depths*, but was marred by the sentimentality which is this director's weak point.

The smaller independent companies, incidentally, have the same difficulties as in other countries. Many of these films received favourable attention from critics, but failed to attract large audiences. At least two companies went bankrupt last year; but one good result was the formation of a co-operative between three of them, the combined staffs producing a low-budget omnibus film under the benevolent supervision of Yoshimura.

DOCUMENTARIES

Over three hundred short and documentary films were produced in Japan last year, but since the abolition of the Film Law of 1945, short films are rarely seen in today's cinema programmes. Under this law, exhibitors were compelled to include documentary and educational films





Yasumi Hara as the flower-girl in "Because I Love", the low-budget omnibus film recently produced on a co-operative basis by independent companies.

in their programmes, but now the only outlet left for producers is in Public Relations films sponsored by commercial companies and government departments.

In spite of this, many producers have struggled to make films of cultural value, and the better type of short is now actually on the increase. One film of particular interest in 1954 was *Tsukinowa Kofun* (*Ancient Tombs of Tsukinowa*), about the tombs on a hill in the village of Yuga, in the Okayama Prefecture of Western Japan, which have been excavated by villagers and schoolchildren since 1953. When the excavations were threatened by lack of funds, all the villagers who could gave money, and those who couldn't gave their labour. A special production committee for the film was set up, including teachers, parent and youth organisations, and cultural and scientific bodies. The finished film achieved commercial exhibition, and was widely acclaimed; it was, however, refused official

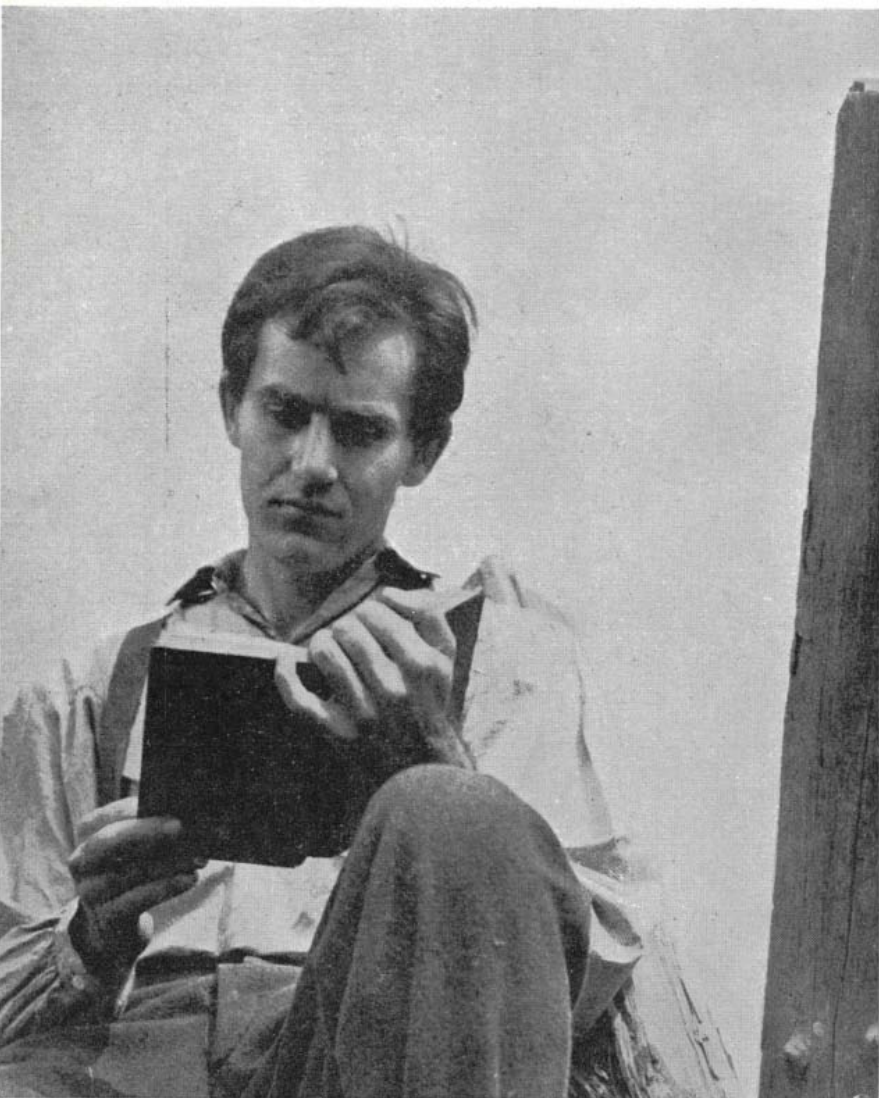
recommendation by Odate, Minister of Education at the time, as it interpreted historical facts from a socialist realist point of view.

The effects of the H-Bomb explosion at Bikini form the subject of several important documentaries. One film, *Shi No Hai* (*Ash of Death*), is a record of the voyage of a research ship, s.s. *Shunkotsu-maru*, which was sent to the area round Bikini to investigate the effects of radiation on sea life. The Blue Ribbon prize, awarded by Tokyo film journalists, went to Asahi News for their reportage, *The Damage by the Bikini H-Bomb Explosions*.

There have also been some interesting art films, notably *Kamakura Bijutsu* (*Medieval Art of Japan*), dealing with 11th century realistic art, and *Kaburagi Kiyokata*, a study of the artist of that name. Two documentaries in Eastman-color have also been highly praised, *Awano Mura* (*Electrification of Awano Village*) and *Sakuma Dam*.

ALBERT JOHNSON

THE TENTH MUSE IN SAN FRANCISCO (2)



Henry Fonda as young Mr. Lincoln.

The San Francisco Museum of Art has been sponsoring a series of film shows with introductory lectures, in which a director's work is presented by himself or by another Hollywood personality.

April 23rd. Kenneth MacGowan is going to speak about John Ford tonight. Attendance has increased noticeably, in spite of extremely mixed receptions in the Press of the de Mille lecture. Mr. MacGowan, according to the programme note, has been a drama critic for various magazines and newspapers, but he is chiefly known here as a film producer (*Becky Sharp, Stanley and Livingstone, Alexander Graham Bell, Young Mr. Lincoln, Lifeboat*). He is also a member of the University of California Theatre Arts faculty, where the cinema department has achieved notable success in the technical training of young students for work in Hollywood studios. Now that he

arrives, his appearance bears out this scholarly record, for he suggests an elderly professor as he carefully straightens out his papers and directs an ingratiating grin at the audience. Slender height; conservative dark clothes; standing behind the rostrum, he might even be a character-actor in a Ford Western. When he speaks, his voice is firm but has an unmistakable persuasiveness.

"... In the early days of 1920, two men left the University of Maine—John Ford and Rudy Vallee. . . . Ford's name was Sean O'Fienne. . . . Ford is called "Jack," and he is not the greatest of directors but the most satisfactory. He is, at his best, the most satisfactory director to come to this strange motion picture industry. He has now made over one hundred pictures. . . ." Mr. MacGowan mentioned what he called "the top of the Western pictures," *Stagecoach*, and pointed out, too, that Ford made the first American World War II documentary films, including *The Battle of Midway*, and that "after the war he made a series of rather trivial films until *The Quiet Man* and *The Sun Shines Bright*." (A surprising observation: *They Were Expendable* and *My Darling Clementine* step indignantly into remembrance.)

"... His films are men's films. He elicits his best performances from his actors, though I thought Maureen O'Hara gave her best acting job in *How Green Was My Valley*. . . . Ford is known for his outstanding quality and integrity as a picture-maker. His pictures may not last as long as some, but he has made films of real merit. . . . He hates to be interviewed. He has told me that *Young Mr. Lincoln* was the picture he enjoyed most. . . ."

Mr. MacGowan then mentioned Ford's partiality for repeating his casts. "As often as possible he uses John Wayne, Victor McLaglen and Ward Bond." Also, it appears, Ford likes to utilize the same people as extras. There is "a woman named Tiny," now much older than she appears in the Lincoln film tonight, who can be noticed in one of its scenes as a young, blonde girl waving a torch. "Eddie Quillan, too, is always used. . . . And once Ford discovers a place for a location, he goes on using it. Monument Valley, on the borders of Arizona, is one of his favourite places. . . . He uses old material over again, too. The dance sequence, the steps and the music used in *Young Mr. Lincoln* are the same ones used in *My Darling Clementine*." Interesting to think of Henry Fonda, too, repeating the same movements in both films, made almost a decade apart. "Ford steals from himself. . . . As a director, he is a curious one. He practically leaves his actors alone. With good actors, who understood the action, he would explain the plot, then leave them alone. . . . They work . . . he will explain what may have been missed, then continue. . . ."

Mr. MacGowan spoke briefly of Ford's inability to manage, indiscriminately, any type of film material. "With *Four Men and a Prayer*, the story was very pukka-pukka Empire. . . . It fell flat on its face . . . Ford couldn't handle it. But on the use of the camera, there is no one better than Ford. The director should know what to do with that camera," he continued, mentioning Olivier's use of the camera in parts of *Hamlet* and Wilder's "harsh and cynical" attitude to it in *Sunset Boulevard*. "Ford always asks, why should the camera move unless the people move with it? . . . Ford dramatizes mood. In *The Informer*, for instance—a dramatization of the mood of the Irish rebellion. In *The Long Voyage Home*, Ford achieved the mood of the sea, but slipped up when he had to deal with women. The shots of luscious women against palm trees—they were far from O'Neill's half-castes. . . . Ford is most successful with Americana, the past of America, in pictures like *Steamboat Round the Bend, Stagecoach, Judge Priest* and *Young Mr.*

Lincoln. He has a great fund of humour, the humour of the Irish, which sometimes goes a little astray. . . ."

Mr. MacGowan sketched the history of *Young Mr. Lincoln's* script. "Lamar Trotti came to me and said, 'I've got an idea for a picture about Lincoln.' The outline was sent to Zanuck. . . ." However, the outline—which used the almanac business, the scenes with the boys on trial, and the scene with the mother—was sent back. The time was not, apparently, ripe for a Lincoln picture in 1939. Then, after the acclaim of Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* on the stage, the outline was sent back to Zanuck again.

"'I think we should work out a treatment,' Zanuck said. . . . I suggested to Zanuck: 'Why don't we save money by letting Mr. Trotti write his own?' After seeing the final script, Ford consented to do it. Only four lines were cut out of the entire script. . . . The picture cost \$625,000. It lost \$100,000 because it had no star—Fonda was almost an unknown then. Secondly, it sounded like an improving film. . . ."

When Mr. MacGowan finished speaking, John Ford seemed more enigmatic than ever. It is not that the producer has been uninformative by the way, but most of us wish he had been more detailed about the director *himself*. We know that John Ford has proved to be interview-proof; and now, after hearing a close associate speak about the man, the impermeability seems to extend even to movie-makers.

Impressions during the Film. The first scene, in New Salem, Illinois, circa 1832, is like an illustration from an old calendar: a rude wooden house facing a dusty country road, a wagon being loaded, children skipping past rolling a hoop, and several men standing in the sun, watching. It is a sentimental vision before us, as are most of Ford's glances into the American past. The first appearance of the hero: Henry Fonda, a magnificent physical reincarnation of the young rustic leader. Nose and forehead have been built up to create a most credible resemblance, and his voice completely captures the calmly modulated, resonant sound that has become so identified with Fonda's screen characterisations, and with the Raymond Massey portrayal of Lincoln as well. . . . Here is Alice Brady, alive again—she and her family are about to depart in the wagon, she gives Lincoln a pile of books in payment for his aid (the script has their eyes meet, the foreshadowing of another encounter is made a bit obvious). The dialogue is quite simple. Lincoln's speech is briefly declarative and homespun. Looking at a heavy volume of Blackstone's *Commentaries*, he says aloud: "That's Law." And already the great Ford vision begins to control the pastoral sequences: young Lincoln, lying out in the countryside, his head resting on a half-log, reading and memorising law, epitomises with direct, clearly etched photography the imaginative sentimentalisation of an American ideal. ("Maybe I'll begin to take this up serious," Lincoln says to himself.)

The early love for Ann Rutledge (played by a vaguely remembered starlet, Pauline Moore), is also expressed in a brief, almost wordless sequence in which the two walk past a long, wooden fence under the full trees, and pause by a river. These images are like delicate vignettes, stylised by silence and the movement of the camera; the visual beauty of the scene, short as it is, sets the mood of the film. Fonda as Lincoln personifies the Ford hero when he abstractedly looks at his beloved Ann and says with the utmost credibility: "I love red hair." That line of dialogue concludes the film's depiction of this early, inarticulate, innocent romance. Almost immediately, after a gradual dissolve from summer to an ice-covered river, young Lincoln is seen walking disconsolately to the wintry grave of

Ann Rutledge. A pity that the backgrounds to this graveyard scene are stagey and unrealistic. Coming after the masterful sequences we have seen, Abe's soliloquy over the grave loses force. The scene is hastily done, and looks that way. The overtones are negligent; the camera captures an image but not a mood. . . . Lincoln's awkward stoicism becomes mawkish. ("Ice is breakin' up . . . well, Ann . . . just can't make up m' mind what t' do. . . .")

John Ford.



Here is the wonderful Lincoln image in a shot of the hero astride a mule, in black clothing, the tall stovepipe hat squarely perched on the middle of his head. He tips his hat to some flowers. The camera lets us watch the figure with a sense of imminent humour, as though we were strangers on a road outside Springfield in 1837, beholding a particularly American specimen of backwoodsman-knight riding into town to seek his fortune. Ford's vision of Lincoln as a young lawyer succeeds in rearranging the heroic mould of Cervantes to fit the contours of a historical personage, for young Mr. Lincoln's spiritual stature is given a more glorious effect by his resemblance to Don Quixote. The physical ungainliness of the man is fused with an almost fearfully clear reasoning power.

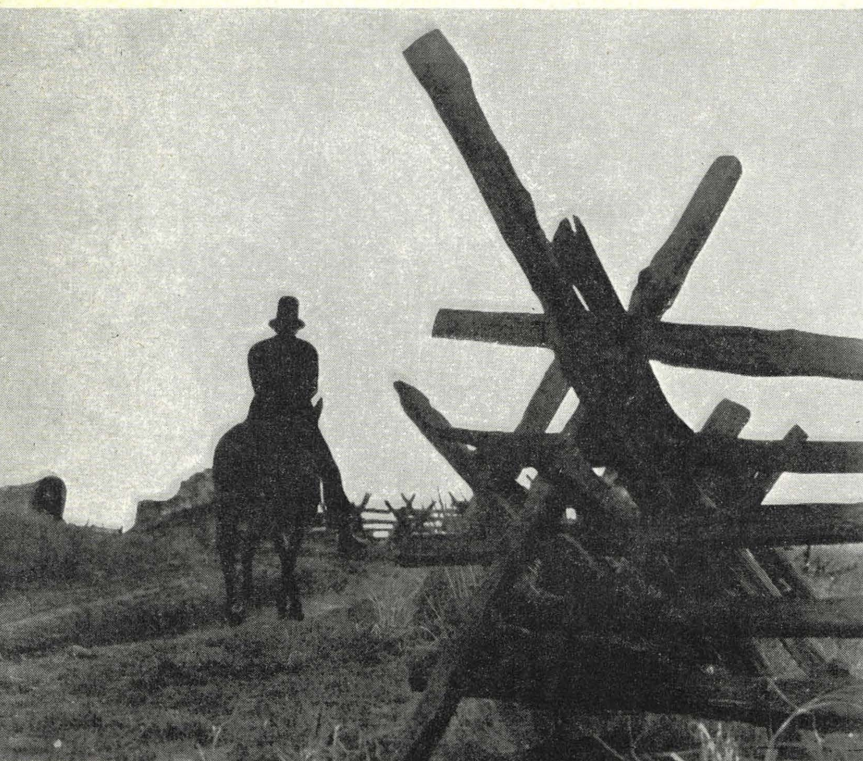
Here is an old-fashioned Fourth of July celebration sequence. A blaring parade in the summer heat; the grizzled veterans of the Revolution. All of the tumult and uproar is reproduced, all the townspeople's excitement admirably recreated; a series of camera-glances build gradually toward a darker climax behind the games, the noise of bugles and the dusty pictures of frontier joviality. Mary Todd (Marjorie Weaver) watches the activities with a young Stephen Douglas; Ward Bond makes his first appearance as a drunken, dangerous lout; Alice Brady and her family (Arleen Whelan, Dorris Bowdon, Eddie Quillan, Richard Cromwell) are in town. . . . Remembering the later teaming of Dorris Bowdon and Eddie Quillan in *The Grapes of Wrath*, the two become definitive representations of the inarticulate, harried young couple of American "ruralism." She with a baby, wearing on her face an incomparable look of blended innocence, ignorance and fear, has somehow captured that very truthful incarnation of the uneducated woman of the Southwest, living solely by intuition and a kind of animal tension.

Now, amid the celebration episodes, is young Lincoln picturesquely glimpsed in a western harlequinade: judging pies, unable to decide between the apple and the peach, splitting rails in a contest which he wins, engaged in a tug-of-war between the "Hog Wallow Boys" and the "Speed County Demons." . . . Then night scenes, torches burning while the revelry continues. I am taken by surprise when the fight comes. The two Clay brothers (Quillan and Cromwell) are involved in a fight with Ward Bond and his henchman, and their three womenfolk rush to the scene. The men fight in a circular clearing in the forest, distant sounds of the struggle can be heard, grunts and scuffings in the dark and the dust. We watch at a distance, from beyond the forest. Fearful looks on the women's faces—the moon moves out from behind the clouds—the men are revealed, fighting clumsily, nervously, on the ground. The flash of a knife, cries of warning, the moon recedes into darkness, a shot rings out, then a cry. . . . The moonlight returns, and a breathtaking scene is before us. The two brothers move back, Bond is motionless, and his wounded friend gasps in the centre of the clearing, staggers in a kind of dancing agony, and falls. He moans and thrashes in pain. . . . A puff of gunsmoke rises in the air, very slowly fades, and there is the sound of crickets. Tension is made almost unendurable by the impassive camera, the spectator feels held back, but fascinated. . . . "Ma! Ma!" the boys cry, as Alice Brady comes forward. "Sshhh!" she warns them. The grunts of the dying man cease and Bond, after shouting an accusation at the boys, runs off to inform the townspeople. The moon retreats again behind a cloud.

I am quite suddenly conscious of not really absorbing the moments that follow the fight sequence—its effect has been so gripping. The angry mob, converted into a lynch-hungry rabble, is prevented by Lincoln from taking the Clay brothers out of the jailhouse. His speech to the mob is direct, simply phrased but eloquent; the interplay of torchlight and the country darkness holds dramatic tension high, and in this night soliloquy there is a kind of semi-illuminated synthesis of the hero's rapid, accumulatively complex personality. When the mob disperses and Lincoln is left alone in front of the jailhouse, a lordly, forceful and dignified musical theme rises all about him from the screen, a leitmotif for "the better type of soul."

reassurance to defend the two brothers in a fair trial, Lincoln turns and looks at their departing wagon. Here, so soon, another Ford vision of the past, in which he gives to his hero his own artistic perceptiveness. . . .

The wagon lurches away, towards the incline of a hill, rounds



"Some intangible hope . . ." "Young Mr. Lincoln".

a bend, outlined in the moonlight; birds flutter across the skies. It is a poetic vision, moved by nature, calm after the tumult. As quiet a sight as this would catch a hero's eyes, and to the spectator there is poignancy and, of course, nostalgia for indefinable things, momentarily stirred and lasting for a little longer than the sequence takes to fade.

The courtroom scenes are filled with uproar. A clamorous, unruly atmosphere ("Take off your hats! Put your jugs away!") shouts the Judge, humorously played by Roger Imhof; and the prosecutor is played by the irreplaceable Donald Meek. At one point, after achieving some minor courtroom victory, one of the townspeople leaps up and pats him on the back. Meek rewards him with a cold and lofty stare—a brilliant moment, subtle and shrewdly pointed, completely summing up his characterisation. Ford and Trotti are using the trial sequence to invest the film with a special brand of prairie humour. On finding that the villain's name is J. Palmer Cass, Lincoln asks what the initial stands for. "Well, I'll call you Jack Cass," he says, and the spectators explode with glee. Later, the Judge bursts out laughing. "I just got it!" he exclaims. . . . The predominant characteristic of nineteenth century American humour was a certain basic crudeness, and perhaps the uproar of an opinionated, small-town trial only appears humorous to many directors, like Ford, when viewed through the rosy lens of time. When this same type of background was brought up to date in the 1930's (*They Won't Forget*, *Fury*), the reflections were much more deadly and the villains often victorious.

After exposing Cass as a liar and murderer, Lincoln puts on his stovepipe hat, winks at his opponents and moves calmly out into the corridor. The stark, bare whiteness of the walls makes him appear taller, and one senses a heightening of mood. The groundwork for the future is laid; young Mr. Lincoln walks outside and stands immobile, framed in the colourless doorway,

facing the cheering crowds. The gaunt figure, the hat and the black suit, the face like an inspired mask that seems to glance beyond everything around it—the hero recognises his destiny, and Ford pictures Lincoln here as Sophocles might have. "I think I might go on apiece. Maybe to the top of that hill," says this full-grown colossus of America's political mythology. The image is perfect. Even Fonda, completely attuned to every mood and movement, seems to have a special quality here.

The camera's visionary glance is turned once more toward the horizon (and also, quite suddenly, it is night), where the hills are outlined and the Clays' wagon moves clumsily toward the top of the incline. The colossus in broadcloth strides with a steady, already wearied pace behind the wagon. The skies are limitless and the figure of Lincoln is sharply etched against the background of trees and space. A quick windstorm blows up, leaves are scattered, and as a chorus begins to sing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" there is a slow, awesome fade-in of the giant Lincoln Memorial statue. The film has ended.

Applause was hearty. I find (two hours later) that the fight in the clearing remains with me, impressing me more than anything else in the film. I think, too, there is something about Ford as a director that I have never been convinced of before. I had always accepted his position, one of the "grand old men" who has somehow tried to maintain a hardheaded objectivity about his work and still managed to keep some poetry in focus before the camera's eyes. Now, I also detect, through his films, a tendency to observe humanity with an impatient sort of pity—the observations of a basically honest man who has been deeply shocked by the pettiness and moral weaknesses which so often dominate human personalities. Individuals in a lynch mob; men breaking under the strain of war; brutal schoolmasters; crude and gullible policemen; military martinets, informers and hangers-on—all seem to have horrified Ford irrevocably. There is, too, a vaguely classical association between Ford's moral outcasts and the ultimately heroic. Thus Claire Trevor (in *Stagecoach*) and Margot Grahame (in *The Informer*) are allowed to endow their portrayals of destitute women with an allegorical aura of benevolence, and as in Griffith's world, there seems to be more of Magdalene than Messalina in each sequence depicting reactions of these women to the hero in distress. It is from these same acceptances of human inadequacy that Ford's sentimentality arises. Since pity is the better part of scorn to him, he has drawn upon a set of values which have made him, in his films, concentrate upon moments of sentiment, moments of sudden inspiration, of a last lingering look at the transitory grandeur of everyday Americans in a bygone era.

The mountain regions of the West and the changing aspects of nature within its environment form the proper background for this director's conception of the ennobling and immortal aspects of life. No matter where his characters may be, no matter what confinement of locale engulfs them, at some point in his films Ford's heroic figures will turn from the hardships at hand, and look away to where some intangible hope seems to lie in wait for them. I am convinced of Ford's boundless love for whatever there is in the world that can help mankind to overcome the sins of society and its vanities. Judging from his favourite personifications of the hero (McLaglen, Fonda, Wayne), even human communicability is too complex, too influenced by society to remain truthful. It is the camera that is able to show what cannot be said, to see what is not always noticed. The lost patrol silhouetted against the white-hot sand and the sun on distant hills in a desert; a son parting from his mother walks upward toward the moonlit slopes until he is outlined against the sky; a destitute old couple leave their shack and slowly walk uphill, into a glowing sunset, toward the poorhouse; three young Welshmen, leaving their village home for the last time, walk up a steep cobbled street as dawn slowly breaks; and, tonight, the final image of an idealised Mr. Lincoln, striding towards the same, inevitable hill.

The Big Screens

As a sequel to the critical views of The Big Screens published in the last number of SIGHT AND SOUND, we wrote to a number of film directors to ask their views. We limited the inquiry to directors already working in the cinema before the arrival of sound, the object being to discover whether, having witnessed one revolution, they considered they were now living through another.

Three questions were asked:—

- 1. As a director who has witnessed one major revolution in the cinema—the arrival of sound—do you consider that the new revolution—wide screens, CinemaScope, etc.—is of comparable artistic and technical importance?*
- 2. Fifty per cent of Hollywood production is now in CinemaScope or VistaVision. Do you consider that either of these systems is likely soon to predominate in world film production?*
- 3. Would you like to make, or have you enjoyed making, films in any of these systems—or do you prefer the ordinary screen?*

Alessandro Blasetti

1. I don't believe that the panoramic screens, CinemaScope and so on, deserve to be called a "revolution" on a par in importance with sound and colour. The sound film and the colour film brought new elements and new dimensions. The panoramic screens can only add to already existing elements and dimensions.

2. The American industry's power is strong enough to oblige other industries to submit to its influence, which is why I predict that the panoramic systems will sooner or later gain the upper hand. Of the two, I prefer VistaVision, because its proportions are more easily adaptable than those of CinemaScope to the frame of great traditional painting.

3. For a large-scale spectacle film with decor to match, and a lot of mass movement, the panoramic screen is certainly preferable. In the case of comedies or dramas with a primarily psychological interest, the diffuseness of the panoramic screen is, in my opinion, of no advantage.

Cavalcanti

1. No. To begin with, I consider the colour period more important, and not yet resolved. The shape of the screen has already changed with the arrival of sound, by the inclusion in the image of the sound track. Aesthetically, the discovery, after painstaking research, of the "golden cup," has synthesised the proportions of works of art in general, and it seems to me that the new screen shapes—wide-screen or CinemaScope—are further than the usual one from the golden cup.

That's why any film director will find it difficult to adapt the close-up, as it has been established, to the CinemaScopic or wide screen. We mustn't forget that the enlarged screen was used several years ago, for certain spectacular sequences of films, and then abandoned with the arrival of sound.

To conclude briefly, I find that when a spectator today sits in almost any seat of a cinema already adapted for CinemaScope, he gets a definitely wrong angle of vision. The adoption of the new systems, if properly carried out, should also imply the construction of new halls—which would be utterly uneconomical.

2. One gets the impression that both systems have been hastily applied in order to combat the public's growing taste for television, and I think that an answer given to this question now would be almost a prophecy and not quite an opinion.

3. I am just finishing the shooting script of my first serious colour picture*, and it is not yet decided if it is going to be made for CinemaScope or not. In any case, because I feel that so many colour problems have not yet been solved, I would prefer—at the moment—to stick to the ordinary screen.

René Clair

1. No.
2. I've no idea.
3. No opinion.

Thorold Dickinson

1. Sound added a new dimension to cinema. Widening the screen varies existing dimensions. What is important is the installing of cinema screens capable of framing a variety of proportions from the traditional 1:1.33 to the widest of all, the new CinemaScope relation of 1:2.55. I omit the Cinerama ratio of 1:2.85 because of the special multiplicity of equipment involved. The lateral freeing of the image is a great relief to film makers who have tired of being stuck with one proscenium, but we must avoid at all costs any effort to standardise film composition into one new framing ratio. Let film makers choose the ratio appropriate to the subject. Let them even plan to vary the ratio within the course of one film.

2. I am no technical expert and I have practical experience of neither system. But I imagine film makers will tire of CinemaScope (if they are to be tied to it) because of its lack of intimacy. Its great width makes it less flexible in use than ratios with a taller image. A small CinemaScope screen (the one at the Rialto in Coventry Street, for instance) seems faintly ridiculous, like peeping through a letter box. The ratio of 1:2.55 presupposes a physical size which almost begins to wrap itself round the spectator, and the effect cannot be achieved in a small theatre where the lack of height makes one feel one wants to look over the top of the image while the sides are always in view. To adopt CinemaScope universally is as if to suppose that all painters want to be Canalettos.

VistaVision is nothing new in screen ratios: it is a technical improvement in registering an image on film occupying twice the area of the traditional negative image. Naturally this lends itself to greater clarity of definition in the image on the screen, even though the positive image is reduced to the normal size for standard projectors. Thus in using VistaVision one can produce an image, sharper than before on a screen much larger than hitherto,

* Cavalcanti is now in Vienna, to film Berthold Brecht's play *Herr Puntila*.

in any chosen screen ratio—even in CinemaScope with the anamorphic lens—if one is prepared to foot the bill for doubling the amount of negative used and for the greater complication in processing. I believe it is well worth the cost to be able to throw a pleasing image on a far greater screen area when the demand arises.

3. I chose the screen ratio of 1:1.66 for my last film, made in Israel. To the lay mind this means a proportion of 3×5 instead of the traditional 3×4 . I found this new proportion of real advantage in a subject which embraces action in landscapes, often with more than one human figure in the foreground. (In the 3×4 ratio the human figures, close to the lens, tend to blot out the landscape, which has to be served up in separate shots usually only at the beginning of a new sequence where interference in tempo matters least.) Intimate scenes I could have done as well in the 3×4 ratio. What I did find was the need for a tall image—the wide screen up-ended—in scenes of street-fighting in the narrow streets of the old walled city of Jerusalem. Here I had to slow up the action—or think around it in a different way—with shots panning up or down. In fact what I wanted was a limitless screen—the end wall of the auditorium—on which one can throw images of any shape or size. Just as D. W. Griffith achieved on a limited scale in his big theatrical presentations of *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*. And as Claude Autant-Lara did 20 years ago when he made *Pour Construire un Feu* (from Jack London's Alaskan story) with Henri Chrétien's anamorphic lens which is now known as CinemaScope. Autant-Lara cunningly constructed his screenplay so that alternate episodes (arranged in separate reels, as in a Russian silent film) used the wide screen on the first projector and the tall screen on the second projector. But, influenced by Abel Gance's *Napoléon*, he showed sometimes two, sometimes three, images side by side as well as one at a time. With VistaVision he could have splashed images of all shapes and sizes all over the screen, using size and scale for physical and dramatic effect. For that matter, the way is open now . . .

Carl Dreyer

1. I would say that wide screens are of no great importance to the artistic film, but CinemaScope is, without any doubt, an appreciable gain for the film director.

2. I am convinced that CinemaScope will very soon predominate. And the sooner an amalgamation of CinemaScope and VistaVision takes place the better—for the benefit of both systems.

3. I believe in the CinemaScope system. It is not yet the last word, but it has already improved considerably and it will certainly continue improving. I would indeed like to make my next film in CinemaScope.

Abel Gance

1. No. The new technical revolution is not, as yet, comparable to the advent of the sound film (and by this I mean more than the "talking" film).

2. I don't think that either CinemaScope or VistaVision is going to dominate world production—because there will soon be new analogous techniques to compete with them. Who can see the battle's outcome?

3. I have already replied to this in an article for *La Technique Cinématographique*, in which I wrote: "The best comparison I can think of for these panoramic

screens, in a period I can only hope is transitional, is with those loudspeakers turned up to maximum volume in fairgrounds, which transform Beethoven into a series of discordant bellows. Apart from Cinerama—which, as everyone knows, is a reanimated imitation of my own invention of the triptych—and apart from my own formula for a *variable screen*, I consider that all these new screens are based on mere magnification of the image. But in addition, far from giving the audience a greater field of vision than before, they have managed—by what aberration?—to reduce the height of this field of vision, thus diminishing the intrinsic interest of the image . . .

All that has happened so far is that a single image, more or less magnified or anamorphosed, has been projected on a strip of screen widened to its utmost. Where can one see real progress in that? Perhaps somebody brings me a bigger plate; but, more or less copious, the meal is still the same! And I don't know what feats of virtuosity will enable my colleagues to furnish—for a whole film, with a single enlarged or widened image—the huge screens now in commercial demand. How many dangers in perspective! How many dead and empty spaces on these screens! How many glances lost in the desert—and the lack of life will be far more apparent than on the ordinary screen. Are there Veroneses, are there Davids, panting for breath, who will try for thousands of feet to people all this solitude? . . .

The cinema seems, finally, a timid kind of museum when after fifty years it still condemns us to a uniform kind of frame for all its pictures. And can one seriously believe that enslavement to a bigger frame, as inflexible as the ordinary one, will in any way cure the illness from which the cinema is suffering? Are not Vermeer and Chardin next door in the Louvre to "The Wedding at Cana," and must one dilate and weaken the colours of a sparkling Corot to stretch it to the size of David's "Coronation of Napoleon"? In default of better proof, I maintain that my *variable screen* is the key to the problem.

Immense—and easily capable, without loss of clarity, of attaining a width of 30 or 40 yards when the image and the placing of the audience demands it; ordinary-sized, and even smaller than the ordinary screen when the image calls for contraction; using the whole surface to frame a single image and then, the next moment, smoothly dividing itself into two or three screens, themselves if necessary subdividing into more, continuous or discontinuous, the *variable screen* is like a visual accordion, allowing us to see the melodic design of a subject and its orchestration simultaneously. . . ."

Meanwhile, I shall prefer to use the "ordinary" screen until I have been able to prove that Polyvision is the only cinematic language of TOMORROW.

Henry King

1. I think the advent of CinemaScope with the wide screen and stereophonic sound has brought about a revolution of Hollywood production comparable to that when sound first came to the screen.

2. CinemaScope predominates in Hollywood over all of the new systems, and I am quite sure it will predominate also in film production throughout the world.

3. I have enjoyed making *King of the Khyber Rifles*, starring Tyrone Power, and *Untamed*, starring Tyrone

Power and Susan Hayward in CinemaScope and stereophonic sound. I have just finished shooting this latter picture. . . . It is a story of one of the great treks of pioneers through Zululand, South Africa, about the year 1847. This picture would never have had its dramatic and scenic value without the CinemaScope lens, which frees the director from the conventional confines of the old type of lens. The CinemaScope lens enables us to bring to the screen what the normal eye sees. In other words, the CinemaScope camera in a measure takes you, the motion picturegoer, to the actual locale of the story and lets you, for the first time, in effect dramatically participate in the scenes.

This lens enables the director also for the first time to show on the screen cause and effect in the same shot, whereas before we used to have to cut from cause to effect in a story, which in a great measure slowed down the pace and prevented the actors from playing long scenes and really feeling the characterisations, as they do on the stage. . . . We need fewer camera set-ups with this new lens, and it brings to the screen a measure of three-dimensional illusion which adds tremendously to the realism of any story we are projecting.

I am sure that anyone who has ever used this new CinemaScope medium would never want to go back to the old lens and ordinary screen. When the public sees pictures in CinemaScope with stereophonic sound I believe they will insist upon us making all of our productions with this new lens and sound.

I now have in preparation *A Many Splendored Thing*, which is the intimate love story of a Eurasian doctor and an English war correspondent in present day Hong Kong. It is from the best-selling novel by Han Suyin. This film will co-star Jennifer Jones and William Holden. The CinemaScope lens will add greatly to this intimate and tender story. It will help us take full advantage of the colourful backgrounds I found in and around Hong Kong.

Marcel L'Herbier

1. When the talking film came, we who had lived through the heroic age of the silent film (1918-29), we who had extolled an art of silence, more eloquent than all the arts of language, we trembled to feel the cinematic ground opening under our feet, as if to engulf all our hopes. . . .

But, quite soon, we saw that in the sound film the word, properly understood, could reinforce the profound virtues of silence.

In distending, has the screen given us cause for similar alarm? For me, not at all. The revolution is less considerable. Less fundamental. Which is not to say there are no *substantial* advantages, of pure artistic value, to be drawn from these new techniques of visual and sound projection.

2. It is certainly too soon—at least from what we have seen in France of American films in CinemaScope or VistaVision—to form definitive ideas on the two techniques. I believe, rather, in a *variable* screen system (like the old magnascope), which can modify in the course of projection, according to the aesthetic demands of the work, the dimensions of the screen.

3. I am going to make *Adrienne Mesurat*, from the very fine novel by Julien Green (whose *Sud* is soon to be played in London), and for this film I would like the *wide* screen at the beginning; but I would like it very

gradually to *contract* during the action, to symbolise the increasing sense of imprisonment which drives the heroine to her final madness.

Lewis Milestone

In all revolutions the tendency on the part of the majority is to throw away and destroy everything "old" and replace it with everything "new." Since destruction can be accomplished in a matter of seconds and construction is a slow and painful process, the first phase in a post-revolutionary period is the realisation of the loss of many things that were good in the "old" and the lack of knowledge of how to use the "new."

Those of us who shed tears because we were forced to trade the pantomimic eloquence of a Chaplin, Murnau or a Lubitsch "silent" for a "oh, yeah," "so is your old man," or a "my heart is crucified upon this door and beyond it lies my soul" talkie, were also bewildered by the additional millions of people whom the advent of sound attracted to the world's cinemas. Encouraged by this show of interest, our best creators dedicated themselves to the task of improving and refining this new medium. They soon discovered that talk, even when it is good, could tire and bore an audience if allowed to go on too long and unrelieved by "action" and "business." So they exhumed the "silent," re-examined it, and in the process of restoring a lot that was lost, learned how to blend the two techniques. The modern motion picture was born.

It prospered from 1929 to 1947, but thereafter began to die. Attendance fell off and many of the theatres closed their doors. Poll takers were invited in to study the tragic situation, and soon their reports began to bombard the producers. Your audience is divided into age groups. The youngest age group is nine years old and the oldest is twenty-five years old. Past twenty-five you have none! The causes are many; lack of interest, the discovery of other fields of entertainment, and economics. Then came the *coup de grace*—television, and with it new explanations. . . .

Something had to be done and they did it! They discovered CinemaScope and all its offshoots! And once again the multitudes jammed the theatres. The producers are again instructing their creators to forget all they've learned and have done in the past. Pointing to the fantastic new grosses, they shout "It's another revolution!", "Get in step!", "It's the wide screen or it's death at the box-office!" The fact that at the height of this new craze *From Here to Eternity* and other films in ordinary dimensions and in black-and-white are grossing as much and in many instances more money than anything in wide screen and in colour, is completely ignored. The producer has discovered another panacea. And the creators, heeding his voice, are again discarding everything that is old before they have learned how to use the new.

I find CinemaScope most effective, also VistaVision, SuperScope, TodeScope and all the rest. But not in every instance. The "scopes" are not even suited to every scene in a story whose overall character cries for the wide screen. The wide screen is a wonderful invention, but it will never be applicable to every story until its inventors can show us how to narrow it down during the action to accommodate intimate scenes between two people, or scenes where only one character is on stage.

Even the theatre, with all its physical limitations, learned

how not to use its entire proscenium arch when certain focus is desired. Yet the director working with the wide screen is forced to use its entire width, be it a scene with one character or a thousand elephants. He is forced to throw away the "screen" for the "stage" technique. He loses the use of the close-up, the rhythmic cutting, and many other advantages of the "old" for the gain of width of the "new."

Somewhere the marriage of the two is possible, and when it is achieved there will be still another technique. A better one, to be sure, but only a technique. The novelty of techniques, as history has taught us, is only good for just so long. But when did Man learn anything from history?

The only element that the audience will not tire of is story *content*. And the reasons for not having it in most films are too numerous to mention here.

Cecil B. de Mille

1. No.
2. Yes.
3. (a) Yes. (*b—or do you prefer the ordinary screen?*) Cannot be answered by Yes or No.

Jean Renoir

1. The adoption of wide screens is only the inevitable consequence of sound. The great weapon of the silent cinema was the big close-up. The big close-up served not only to explain a situation or interpret an inner feeling. It was a direct communication between the actor-master and the public-slave. The result was a little like hypnotism. From the moment when dialogue broke into films it was natural that the big close-up should disappear, giving way to dialogue scenes comparable to scenes from a stage play. Now it is very difficult to frame in close-up, on the square-shaped screen, more than two people talking. The right kind of framing for a conversation between half a dozen people would be a frieze. I must add that I regret the close-up as I regret the disappearance of solos in modern opera.

2. Evidently—or almost so, as I have just explained—framing a conversation is easier on a wide screen than on a square one. All my colleagues have experienced the tedium of having to frame a scene round a dinner table. Either you set up far enough away to include all the guests sitting round the table, in which case they become too small for all their facial play to register on the screen; or you come nearer, and replace the table that is of normal size in medium shot with a tiny table in close-up. Personally, I like these tricks. I am afraid that making framing—and other things—easier may completely destroy a certain primitive strength very necessary to the cinema.

3. I prefer the ordinary screen, but I can't choose. Apart from the other pressures I have already outlined, there is an even more imperious one: fashion. Fifteen years ago the dream of everyone about to retire was to build himself a tall house with, if possible, an imitation gothic tower. Today the same person dreams of a house with at most two storeys, windows wide but not high; in the same way, his I-shaped car radiator has given way to one that looks like a laughing mouth, with all its teeth showing. Our contemporaries see things horizontally. The previous generation saw things vertically. Neither you nor I can do anything to alter that.

Josef von Sternberg

I just returned from a long journey to find your questionnaire. I should have answered that quality and integrity of work has no relationship to size, but that the enlarged screen makes it easy for the midget to seem heroic. However, any medium properly used can be effective.

King Vidor

1. I consider that the use of the large screen in making a motion picture is a decided advance in every respect over the square and smaller screen which has been used previously. I pioneered in the early experiments of the wide film use, and actively engaged in trying to persuade Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to make films on large screens as early as, I believe, 1936. We made one film, *Billy the Kid*, in black and white on 70 mm. negative, which was reduced to the regular 35 mm. negative and then again enlarged to the full width of the proscenium arch in the wide theatres, being comparable in size to the large screens of today. This was shown in about 11 or 12 theatres in the U.S.A. at that time. There is no logical reason why the dimensions of the motion picture screen should be confined to a small square, or stamp-like screen situated in the centre of a large auditorium. With the width of the new screens, the width of the audience, and the width of the auditorium, is more nearly approximated; and the scope that the director saw when he was directing it is brought into the theatre for the audience in a truly more realistic degree than was possible with the old screens. A director was always conscious in the older methods of having to eliminate much of the benefit to either side of the aperture that he could not bring into his camera range.

2. I think that there is no doubt but that either CinemaScope or VistaVision will increasingly take over world-wide production. I know of several films to be made in Italy which are being planned in either of these two mediums. I cannot predict at this time which of the two mediums will be the most generally used.

3. I would definitely like to make films in this new dimension, and I have made one with the ordinary 35 mm. Technicolor film which was enlarged to the new dimensions in many theatres.* I am also planning at this time a film of rather large scope to be done in Europe, and the present indications are that we will use VistaVision.

William Wyler

1. No.
2. No.
3. I have just completed a film in VistaVision. This process seems to me to be superior to ordinary screen processes. There is a distinct advantage to a director in having a larger and clearer negative. However, the full utility of the VistaVision negative is contingent upon the use of bigger screens in ordinary theatres.

In general, I do not believe this to be a "revolution" in the true sense of the word. On the other hand, I would not call the new processes "artificial" improvements. They are, in most cases, real and sound technical advances in motion picture making.

* *Man Without a Star*, a western story with Kirk Douglas and Jeanne Crain.

The Troubled Man

PHILIP MACKIE

Both the National Film Theatre and the Everyman Cinema, Hampstead, recently held a Memorial Programme of films by Richard Massingham. The proceeds were devoted to a trust fund (of which details are available from the British Film Institute) set up for the education of his son, Adam.

IT is not easy for me to write about Dickie Massingham. I loved him as a man, and perhaps that clouds my judgment. Also, he is difficult to pin down: he was not one of those who stay in one place or who move in a smoothly curved orbit. He was various: actor, director, producer, head of a film company, all at the same time. He started (and spent years) as a doctor, scouting the theory that all good directors have to start as tea-boys or cutting-room assistants. He gave up doctoring for film-making because he liked film-making better. He took to acting in his own films because he enjoyed acting. He set up his own company because his talent was special and quite unrelated to anything else in the short-film world. His variety dissipated a good deal of his energy. Massingham hated business: it bothered him, at times when he shouldn't have been bothered. He swallowed the nasty fact, that film-making is an industry, only after making a very wry face. He had the technical ability of a professional but the viewpoint of an incorrigible amateur, only happy when he was doing something he liked together with people he liked.

I find it almost strange to use the word "happy," because although Massingham found great personal happinesses, and although his work gave him much pleasure and some satisfaction, he was melancholy by nature. I think he was a man of between-the-wars who could not like the post-war world. It saddened him to reflect on the way we live now. Cheerfulness broke in, and sometimes even hope; but when he got to thinking, sooner or later he thought himself into a pit of despair. He was a sensitive man, troubled by life; and his troubledness was the basis for his best work—the creation of his screen-comedian self. He was an excellent director, but he was a great comedian.

I recall one film particularly, because I think the making of it caused Massingham to consider deeply his whole philosophy as a comedian. A long time ago, in the worst days of shortages and restrictions, the Central Office of Information decided to engender two one-reelers which would somehow or other help to build public morale. We (no names no pack-drill) called in two film-makers who seemed to us to be as near genius as makes no matter: Humphrey Jennings and Richard Massingham. We explained that the films were to produce a general feeling of robustness and vitality—it's good to be alive in Britain today—the country has taken some hard knocks but it'll pull through just as it has done many times before—down with the Jeremiahs and the Dismal Jimmies, let's roll our sleeves up and get on with the job. . . . Well, Jennings went his own sweet way, and came back many months later with a piece of film-poetry which he wanted to call



With Russell Waters in "What a Life!"

"The Last of England"—after, as of course you will realise, the Ford Madox Brown painting. The C.O.I. so tired itself out with vetoing this title, it had no strength left to refuse his second suggestion: *Dim Little Island*. . . . Meanwhile, the other epic, to be called *What A Life!* was in its birth-throes. Massingham and Michael Law (another pessimist) and I sat over innumerable Baker Street tea-cups, Massingham with his great hopeless eyes and his gently despairing voice: "*But Philip, really, what is there to be cheerful about nowadays?*" Anyway, we managed to find a beginning and a middle. Massingham would be a man who woke up one morning in excellent spirits—not for any special reason, just naturally. He would be greeted by a rationed breakfast, a grumbling wife, and a dismal eight o'clock news. As the day wore on, he would slowly be ground down by the voices of gloom that assailed his ears, the headlines of doom that met his eyes, and all the petty torments of the bus-queue and the waiting-list. His spirits at their lowest ebb, he would meet Russell Waters (Laurel to his Hardy), who had undergone the same treatment with the same result. What next? We asked ourselves. Massingham was pained by the necessity, but logically, he said, the only thing for them to do was commit suicide. So we arrived at the point in the story where he and Waters had taken the train to Southend, rowed out into the sunset, hauled down the Union Jack, tied millstones round their necks, shaken hands for the last time . . . and there we got badly stuck. There was no way out. There they were committing suicide, and it seemed a perfectly reasonable thing to do. Something had to break. We found an ending which was unsatisfactory perhaps, but true to Massingham's character: the two almost-suicides saw that their situation was fundamentally comic, not tragic, and they began to laugh.

I think *What a Life!* was a funny film. I know that Massingham was very funny in it. It showed off his exceptional gifts as a screen comedian.

He—I speak of the screen Massingham—was essentially passive, not really an actor but a reactor. He did not

(Continued on page 220)

On the Waterfront

A defence and some letters

A DEFENCE

Robert Hughes

"Two and two continue to make four in spite of . . . the cry of the critic for five."—Whistler.

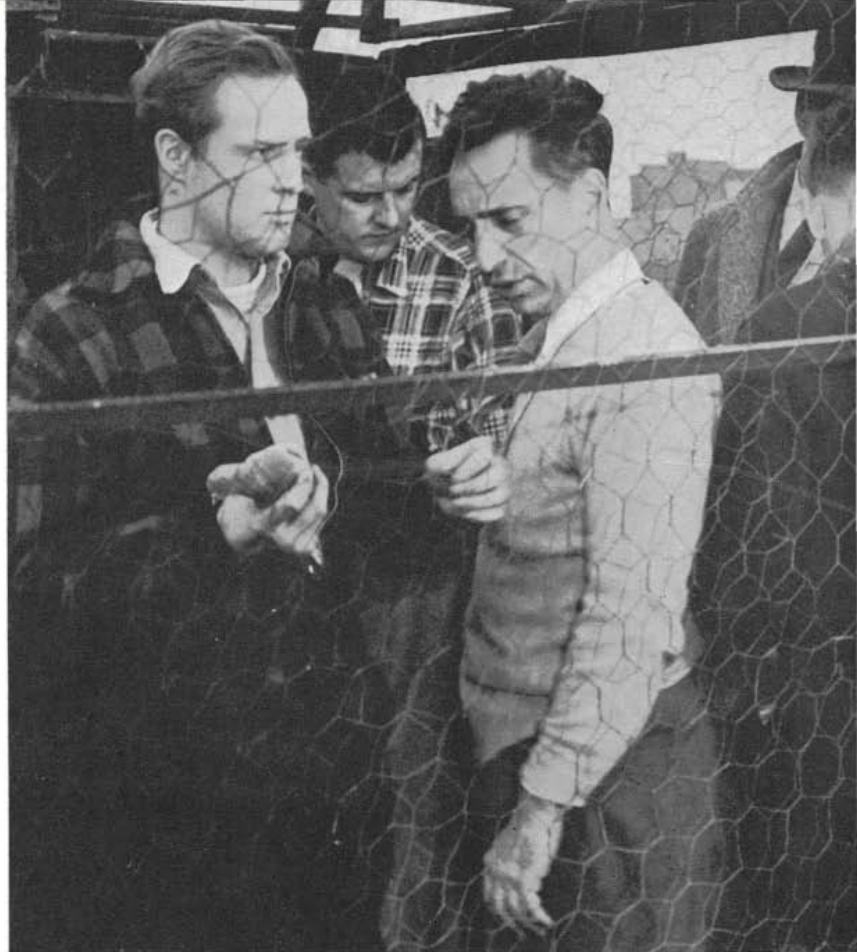
THE last sequence of Lindsay Anderson's outcry against *On the Waterfront* compares the film with *Force of Evil*, and ends: "And where is the director of *Force of Evil* today? . . . banished from Hollywood for his political sympathies." Now what has such information to do with *Force of Evil* as a film, or with *On the Waterfront*, or with Kazan? It is a resounding irrelevancy, on a par with gossip about Brando's romance or his pet racoon; that Hollywood has banished Polonsky and kept Kazan invests neither's film with any more or any less merit, and should find no prominence in critical argument. (It is possible, perhaps, to read Ezra Pound's poetry without straining all the time to hear the voice that broadcast for the Fascists during the war.) In approaching *On the Waterfront*, I think we may tiptoe past Kazan's present "political position," whatever it is. Lindsay Anderson, after all, protests that he is "not advocating judgment of films according to any narrow set of specific political principles," not condemning this film "because it fails to conform to any particular political creed." Admirable, if true—but is it? What, then, of his comments on the political positions of Polonsky and Kazan (and Dmytryk)? What of "essential conclusions are evaded?" What of "the potency of Marlon Brando . . . effectively employed to palm off a number of political assertions, all of them spurious and some of them pernicious?"

To prefer a different set of political assertions is one thing; to let that preference vitiate one's whole estimate of a film is quite another.

2

The film's rolling title seems to me not so much Kazan's own programme but the kind of blurb usual in films containing social comment, an establishment of the makers' credentials and good faith. But, assuming it invites us to "examine closely the political implications": "We are expected to accept Friendly's position and his domination over the waterfront through the agency of (apparently) half-a-dozen picturesque thugs." Must Kazan retail *again* the lengthy process of graft? Cinemagoers are sophisticates in American corruption, and they get enough of the background to make it convincing. A docker says at the beginning that a lifetime on the waterfront has taught him to keep his mouth shut. Thugs, we quickly realise, have controlled the docks for years; Friendly's racket is nothing new; he took over from thugs who gave him a horrible neck wound.

"The means by which he has achieved his power . . . are not clearly shown." They are. We see Doyle, Duggan and Charlie murdered, the attempt on Terry and Edie, the church meeting broken up. We hear a mother: "they killed my Andy five years ago," and the negro docker on the Union: "you stand up and make a motion—the lights go out—then you go out." And "Pop" Doyle, taking money from Friendly's treasurer: "If we don't borrow, we don't work." The dockers have been conditioned by years of thuggery. Their submissiveness is ingrained. The "skimped" enquiry and the "elliptically presented" scene of Friendly's backer could as easily, I think, be called impressionist—to think "most audiences" will not grasp that Friendly has powerful backing is to underestimate their film sophistication. (And must a director gear his film to the least intelligent of his public?) However, as Mr. Anderson



Elia Kazan directs Marlon Brando in "On the Waterfront".

remarks, "those who have intelligence should use it to scrutinise and question." At the wedding scene, a thug buttonholes Terry: "Boss wants you. . . . He's just got a call from Mister Upstairs." Having decided to testify, Terry smashes his glass against the garlanded photograph of Friendly with his arm round an elderly well-dressed man. Dissolve to the enquiry and, during it, cut to the backer watching it on T.V.

"If Mr. Friendly calls, I'm out." "Any time today." "If he calls ever, I'm out." What could be more explicit?

"Our sole contact with the police is through the two avuncular plainclothesmen." It is not. We see a policeman vainly investigating Doyle's death: "I know how you feel about cops, but maybe if you'd give me a few leads I could. . . ." Friendly gets a 39-page copy of Duggan's secret testimony to the crime commission. "How'd you get that?" Terry asks. "We got it. . . ." When Terry asks Tommy if he ought to turn in a murderer, the boy replies: "To the cops? You kiddin'?" And we see the two policemen detailed to protect Terry, one of whom considers that Terry betrayed his friend.

3

"What exactly does Terry awake to? Over her first beer-and-chaser, Edie is not slow to remind him that no man is an island, but after this promising start the subject is dropped." It is not. Over Duggan's body, Father Barry tells the dockers, with Terry listening, that they are all "brothers in Christ," and that "the love of a lousy buck" rules the docks, not "love of Man." In the park, Terry says to Father Barry: "You're asking me to put the finger on my own brother." "Well, you've got some other brothers," is the reply, "and they're getting the short end."

"What he does, he does for himself, to avenge his brother's murder and for the beaux yeux of Edie." Proper scrutiny reveals Terry gaining moral awareness. From the start a virus of uneasiness works obscurely within him regarding Joey's death. "Everyone's putting the needle on me. . . . I didn't like the way that priest was looking at me." Edie replies: "He was looking at everyone the same way." In the hold, Terry tries to warn Duggan. He protests at the stoning of Father Barry and finally knocks out the thug responsible. Father Barry tells him at one point to follow his conscience. "That stuff," he mutters, "that stuff can drive you nuts." Edie repeats the advice, and "Conscience!" he yells, "that's all I bin hearin' lately." "I never mentioned the word before," she answers.

His brother offers him a sinecure of four hundred dollars a week to keep silent. "I get all that for doin' nothing? . . . There's more to this than I thought, Charlie, I'm tellin' you, there's a lot more." Charlie fails to buy Terry's silence; and Terry, as Penelope Houston pointed out in her review of the film, "makes it clear to his brother that his betrayal of the gang is irrevocable"—before, of course, his brother's death, after which he has the further impetus of revenge.

Matching and emphasising Terry's change is the ironic reversal in Edie. She wants Terry to leave—what have the dockers done for him, that he should risk himself further? Terry rejects this plea: "I ain't a bum, Edie. Don't worry. I ain't gonna hurt nobody. I'm just goin' down there and get my rights." Why should this awareness of his dignity preclude awareness of the dignity of others? He wants his rights as a docker, and with him he takes his docker's hook and the jacket worn by the two other dockers who risked their lives against Friendly. The jacket is a sign that Terry is representing more than himself. Previously, "Do it to him before he does it you" was his philosophy; in his grief he meant to avenge his brother by taking "it out on their skulls," but the priest, persuading him instead to testify, reiterates that "shooting lead into a man's flesh" is no solution. And now: "Don't worry. I ain't gonna hurt nobody." In its context a highly moral sentiment.

4

A word on characterisation and direction. The priest has been called unconvincing and theatrical. Preachers, however, like orchestral conductors and politicians, are public performers. They need histrionic ability; and the scene in the hold is Father Barry's big moment, which he takes with professional bravura. "There is the spirit of a Spartan mother within the breast of Edie." To me, Edie is more like Virgilia than Volumnia; she pleads with Terry to leave the docks, she protests twice as he is about to undergo his final ordeal and, at the end of it, her smile, with Father Barry's, recognises their victory, Friendly's discomfiture and defeat. (The surmise that the battered Terry is going to do a full day's work in the dockyard is quite unwarranted.)

"Hysterical film-making . . . tricks . . . horrid vulgarity . . . the notion of decorum is unknown." This hysterically overstates the case. One trick—the ship's siren that drowns Terry's confession to Edie—is certainly unjustifiable, but otherwise I must concur in the "currently fashionable estimate" (is the sneer necessary?). What about the examples of Kazan's restraint? There is the scene in which Edie finds Terry on the roof: few words, the pigeons softly uneasy, a clarinet to state the love theme, and the skylight showing Terry's face white and strained against the darkness. Terry walks Edie home from the church meeting: unobtrusive photography, cutting and music are the servants of the players, letting them carry the burden of the episode and establish its mood. There is the wonderful scene between Terry and Charlie in the taxi, which Kazan presents with directness and simplicity, abetting his actors with a natural yet imaginative use of lighting—the shifting relationship of the brothers is pointed by the shifting light playing on them from outside the taxi—and with the broad slow tune for strings which begins on "It was you, Charlie, it was you" (and recurs as Terry discovers Charlie's body in the alley). As to "looming close-ups that seek to impose their mood on us by sheer size," there are very few in the film—and none of the meaningless size of, say Robert Parrish's in *The Purple Plain*. One critic (Peter Brinson) in fact praised Kazan for "filming the majority of his scenes with Brando in medium close-up and tight two-shot."

5

On the Waterfront is "political," Lindsay Anderson claims, in a way comparable to *The Grapes of Wrath*. I would put the whole emphasis differently. Whatever its origins, the film comes to us and should be judged primarily as personal drama. Implications there are, of course—but apparently not the ones Mr. Anderson wants.

There are two sides in the film, one characterised by a thorough-going viciousness, the other given a Christian shading. To which side does Terry owe loyalty? The question is central to the action, and we get the answer in the last sequence. One value dominates the waterfront: loyalty. It is the moral criterion of docker and thug, a mechanism continually at work: "However much we hate the torpedoes," Duggan explains, "we

don't rat." When Terry salutes the murdered Doyle with "He wasn't a bad kid, that Joey," a thug replies: "He was a canary." ("Stoolpigeon," "pigeon," "canary," "rat," "cheese-eater," are key words throughout the film.) Terry is strongly influenced by this moral climate. What quality impresses him most in his pigeons? (The irony is clear.) "One thing, though, they're very faithful."

The film opens with Terry on the gang's side, and the dockers hostile to him. Thus his reaction to the crime investigators is automatic: "Takin' me for a pigeon—I ain't no cheesie!" Soon, though, it becomes confused; he would rather not go "stooling" on the church meeting—"Stooling," Charlie patiently explains, "stooling is ratting on your friends, the people you're with"—and in the church we see him listening to Father Barry's "What's ratting to them is telling the truth for you." Is it a matter of standpoint, then? Terry is being got at by both sides. "Whose side are you on?" Edie asks. "Whose side are you on, boy?" the thug asks when Terry protests at the stoning of Father Barry.

What gives him pause is his loyalty to his brother Charlie. They are asking him to "put the finger on" his own brother. This crucial issue is decided in the taxi scene. Under the investigator's questions about the "rigged" fight, he has begun to attach responsibility: "my own—" he blurts out. And in the taxi, words come to him. "It was you, Charlie, it was you . . . I was your kid brother, you should have looked after me a little bit." It is only with that fact crystallised, brought out into the open and faced, that Terry can override his loyalty and testify.

Politically, the film could perhaps end with Terry's testimony, but as personal drama it demands the final sequences. Isolating them, Lindsay Anderson finds them "implicitly Fascist" and, at the last, "pointless." But the enquiry does not leave Terry on the other side; he finds himself in a no-man's-land. If he refuses to regard himself as a betrayer, others do. His gangster friends won't talk to him, his pigeons are killed by Tommy—"a pigeon for a pigeon"—and at the quayside, where he finds Friendly still in undoubted (if temporary) control and denying him work, the dockers shun him. He stands alone. He turns and goes down to Friendly, to make his new allegiance clear. Disloyalty is the substance of the charges they level at each other.

"You gave it to Joey, you gave it to Duggan, you gave it to Charlie who was one of your own!" "You ratted on us, Terry!" "From where you're standin' maybe, but I'm standin' over here right now. . . ." His standpoint has changed. "I was ratting on myself all these years, and I didn't know it . . . I'm glad what I done!"

The dockers do not immediately accept Terry's change of side. They stand by while he is being beaten up—through fear, and because "he's one of theirs, anyway." It takes Terry's walk to demonstrate at once their acceptance of him, and the finality of Friendly's defeat.

A docker: "Terry don't work, we don't work." Friendly: "Work? He can't even walk!" A docker: "If Terry walks in, we walk in with him."

Far from being pointlessly engineered by Father Barry, the walk is in response to Friendly's sneering challenge and the dockers' invitation. The dockers have now expressed solidarity with Terry, accepting him as a fellow, not necessarily as a leader. They have begun at last to assert themselves. "He don't work, we don't work" is a classic strike opening; the "old workman" who causes Friendly to overbalance into the water is "Pop" Doyle, who had kept silent about Friendly's murder of his son, and the docker who says, "If Terry walks in, we walk in with him," is Jimmy Collins, who had kept silent about his friend Joey's murder. . . .

Certainly the conclusion, which Lindsay Anderson dislikes, offers no facile solution. Kazan is honest enough not to pretend that the waterfront situation has magically changed. The dockers' victory is by no means total. Grim authority still exists over them, but they have asserted themselves in a limited fashion. They did not stop Terry's beating (Kazan may believe some examples in recent history bear him out here); but maybe, a docker hopes, they'll manage now to run their Union "on the up and up."

Friendly's sponsor apparently goes scot-free; another Friendly may arise. To ask for more than this is to cry for a moon of social perfection, for some ideal political "five."

POINTS FROM LETTERS

Bravo Lindsay Anderson for your article about *On the Waterfront*, and especially for your comparison of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Pinky*. Kazan's work I used to call "Sozialromantik"—e.g. "Social-romanticism."

B. KLEINER.

Zollikon Zurich,
Switzerland.

The last sequence of *On the Waterfront* left me quite confused as to what it was all about, and I found Lindsay Anderson's article a helpful stimulus to thought. I regret his conclusions and disagree with them. As a psychiatrist I am always diffident about assessing people's motives, and the attributing of insincerity to Kazan is a little rash, especially when it is based on an interpretation of the last sequence which appears to me quite untenable.

Is it not possible that Terry Molloy's walk to the shed had a reference in Kazan's mind to Christ's Via Dolorosa, with the difference that Terry's crucifixion preceded the walk? Surely his courage and suffering were portrayed as atonements for the very ordinary cowardice and stupidity of his workmates. Whether Kazan believes in atonement by individuals for group rottenness is beside the point. The Christian Church, as Anderson calls it, does. Hence, no doubt, the smiles on the faces of its representative and the convent-educated girl-friend. One may dismiss the walk along the quay as "pointless," but to dismiss it on the grounds advanced appears to me perverse. There was nothing whatever in the sequence to suggest that poor bone-headed Terry would become the dockers' new leader, and for Anderson to talk about him performing "a ritual demonstration of Superiority" is sheer fantasy—regrettable fantasy in view of his next sentence, which reads: "The conception of this sequence seems to me implicitly (if unconsciously) Fascist." When the dockers shout "if Terry walks in we walk in with him," they are not creating a new Führer—they are merely insisting that Terry be given the work *which he has been refused by the Union job-allocator less than an hour previously*.

To describe this tardy demonstration of solidarity as "Vital Democracy" is, I agree, pompous nonsense. To suggest, as Anderson does, that it is not a good example of Unionism working properly and efficiently, is also rubbish. What does he want? The farcical insincerity of the collective farm and tractor factory Idylls, or the sincerity that faces the fact that men on the whole manage their affairs very badly, that they are muddled and cowardly but are occasionally capable of bravery and concerted action, that issues and motives are rarely single or simple, that authority is, by the nature of its function, paunchy and complacent, and that the dethroning of a tyrant has never yet resulted in the materialisation of a local Utopia.

D. BARDON.

Shenley Hospital,
Near St. Albans, Herts.

The last sequence is the one in which the moral—if there is one—is put over, and Lindsay Anderson is right to take the last sequence for the text of his excellent analysis of *On the Waterfront*.

But one of the propaganda points put over a number of times in the film is that nothing much can be done to clean up the corruption that has got into the dockers' union, except the unaided efforts of our hero; the idea of concerted action, as Anderson shows, is rejected by the film—and this is supposed to be a picture of a trade union, where concerted action is the regular thing, as even dock labour leaders in Britain like Arthur Deakin know.

This is especially misleading as, in actuality, the New York dockers did fight through their union to rid the waterfront of the gangsters and the employers who supported them.

LEN URB.

19 Lawford Road,
Kentish Town, N.W.5.

I find Mr. Lindsay Anderson's criticism of *On the Waterfront* not only subjective, which is permissible, but almost dishonest. It would appear that he disliked the film when he saw it and now tries to establish intellectually the basis for his reaction. . . . I cannot agree that the "agonised pilgrimage down the quay is pointless." Surely it is obvious (and perhaps for that reason Mr. Anderson ignores it) that when the other workers say "if Terry

walks in, we walk in with him," it is only because they have realised that Terry has, by his personal action, been fighting their battle, and it is a matter of courtesy and respect to give him the right to lead them in a return to work and decent conditions. The only principle involved is that of sympathy and understanding for this man who has fought on their behalf. There is inherent in this scene, and other parts of the film, a criticism of ordinary men for lack of courage in demanding and fighting for their rights. That does not make the film anti-democratic, for surely it can be interpreted as a criticism of ordinary people in *not* recognising their rights under democracy.

The reference to the "hysterical priest" I would not argue with, as I found this character not only offensive but quite unnecessary to the theme of the film.

CHARLES S. SPENCER.

14 Brunswick House,
Balcombe Street, N.W.1.

I read Lindsay Anderson's article about the moral implications in *On the Waterfront* with the greatest admiration. What he says needed saying, and he says it with lucidity and conviction. I feel that congratulations are due to him, and also to SIGHT AND SOUND for giving him space in which to develop his argument at adequate length.

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE.

8 Rayner's Road,
Putney, S.W.15.

"What exactly does Terry awake to?" asks Mr. Anderson. It is doubtful whether Terry has the intelligence to be able to categorise and label his own ideas. What notions he has of what is right and what is wrong must be attached to something or someone more personal and affecting—at first his brother and then Edie. At the beginning of the film, Terry's moral standards are personified in his brother. If he encounters any fatal violence in his work for Friendly, Terry is content to close his eyes to it; after all, his brother does. Terry's moral awakening is also his achievement of a freer-thinking, independent personality. Mr. Anderson is right when he says that "what he does, he does for himself"; but is it not important that for the first time in his life he is prepared not only to take a decision himself but to act by it? The background of the film may be dockland gangsterism, but the central drama belongs to Terry.

If this view is taken, some of Mr. Anderson's other criticisms seem less applicable. It does not matter how Friendly achieved his hold on the waterfront—all that matters is how he keeps it. His ascendancy is maintained by force and violence . . . but most of all it is maintained because of the acquiescence of the part-frightened, part-apathetic dock labourers. . . . The climax of the film is an avowedly melodramatic working out of its predominant theme—the rebirth in Terry of an individual personality with the beginnings of moral awareness.

It is here that Mr. Anderson plunges his most telling shafts, for the final sequence is the weakest part of the film. In several recent films depending for immediate impact on a tale of fairly violent action, Kazan has shown a tendency to try too hard for his effects in potentially exciting climaxes—*Man on a Tightrope* is the most obvious example. In *Waterfront*, he attempts to achieve in the last sequence a symbolism of wide social application which otherwise his film does not emphasise. It is Terry's acid test, in which he undergoes a sort of wild catharsis. . . . The ending is unsatisfactory, the pseudo-symbolism jarring after the realistic idiom of what has gone before, but it is evidence of a Hollywood tendency to "have it big" rather than a betrayal of the film's inherent sincerity.

Mr. Anderson is at fault when he draws conclusions from the attempted symbolic nature of the last sequence, and attempts to apply them to the naturalistic episodes of the earlier parts of the film. Such criticism is illogical and facetious, and his attack seems to me symptomatic of a recent disturbing tendency in SIGHT AND SOUND—an automatic disparagement of directors with great technical ability. Often their films may be pretentious, hollow monuments to their skill as technicians (as Clouzot's *Wages of Fear*, or Huston's *Moulin Rouge*), but this does not necessarily follow. If so, why does SIGHT AND SOUND not castigate Lang's *The Big Heat*, a particularly violent thriller told with considerable professional skill, which would be destroyed completely by a moral investigation on Mr. Anderson's lines?

G. H. JONES.

Brasenose College,
Oxford.

Book Reviews

KING OF COMEDY, by Mack Sennett, as told to Cameron Shipp. (Doubleday and Co., New York, \$4.50.)

One approaches Mack Sennett's autobiography with high hopes, and at first it looks as though they will be justified. But the promise of the initial chapters isn't sustained, which is a pity. Sennett is one of the few early pioneers still alive, and his memoirs could and should have been an important addition to the limited library of authoritative literature on the early days of movie-making. Unfortunately Sennett tells too many personal anecdotes, spends too much space on a highly sentimentalised version of his romance with Mabel Normand, and devotes entirely too little time to his films themselves. The early Sennett years are covered in some detail, and form the best part of the book. He describes his period at Biograph under Griffith, giving an accurate and enjoyable picture of the hectic, fun-loving conditions in which his Keystone classics were made. But here again, the approach is a shade too chatty and personal; acknowledging his great debt to Griffith, he yet gives no examples (and the brilliant *Barney Oldfield's Race for Life* would have been a perfect one) of the way the lessons learned from Griffith were utilised. Similarly, Sennett refers to Thomas Ince's co-operation in extending him facilities through the use of his sets, props and mobs, but gives no details as to how these facilities were exploited. Thus, looking today at a film like *Cohen Saves the Flag*, one has to conjecture as to what is improvisation, and whether the credit for the staging of big battle scenes belongs to Sennett or to Ince.

The biggest disappointment is that Sennett obviously considers the pre-1920 years to be his "Golden Era," and rarely strays into other periods. Almost certainly, the best Sennetts were made during the 'twenties—the glorious satires on established Hollywood successes, principally Westerns and Stroheim extravaganzas. Sennett's joyous exploitation of "cheerful sadism," entirely without malice, the brilliantly sustained slapstick of such features as *Small Town Idol*, all this was the product of the early 'twenties. Yet this is a period that Sennett barely mentions in his autobiography; he will refer briefly to the talent of Del Lord, one of his key directors in the 'twenties, and then skip back to an old Keystone anecdote. Almost all of the limited space devoted to the 'twenties is concerned with the unsolved William Desmond Taylor murder case, and its effects on Mabel Normand. In fact, the Mabel Normand story is really the only cohesive element of the entire narrative, and is so romanticised as to be often unreliable. Gallantly, but unnecessarily, Sennett glosses over the tragic final years of her life, and avoids any mention of the drug addiction which was the prime reason for her failing health and ability. Apart from quick references to the Bing Crosby shorts, the sound period is ignored completely.

The book contains relatively few errors, and they are of the familiar type: he repeats the old cliché about Griffith *inventing* the close-up, mixes up a few dates and facts, announces that Tom Mix was discovered by Ince (the two were never associated in any way). And the great enigma of why Sennett's two-reelers of the 'twenties were so much inferior to his one-reelers is not touched upon. Yet the difference between a dull, hackneyed two-reeler like *Motor Boat Mamas* and the inventive, fast-paced humours of the shorter *Skylarking* is quite amazing.

King of Comedy certainly is a disappointing and incomplete book. But it is warm, readable and full of an appropriate sense of fun. Provided one is prepared to read *between* the lines, it makes a valuable addition to any reference library.

WILLIAM K. EVERSON.

TAKE IT FOR A FACT, by Ada Reeve. Illustrated. (William Heinemann, 21s.)

Ada Reeve is one of that little group of performers whom time seems quite unable to deter. After a remarkably full career—juvenile ballad singer, busker, principal boy, music-hall comedienne, Gaiety Girl, cabaret and revue artist, manager, producer, raconteur, traveller and wit—she launched into a film career when in her seventies, and now, at eighty, has compiled a remarkably vivid, sparkling, yet informative theatrical memoir.

Quite recently we have seen her (as Queen Victoria) on television; yet she can say: "In the 1883 pantomime at the Pavilion, Bessie Bonehill played principal boy. I (was) Old Man of the Sea . . ." or, "In the dressing room with me (Tivoli, Autumn, 1891) were Lottie Collins, Bessie Bellwood, Nellie Navette, Fannie Leslie and Marie Lloyd." Figures now legendary appear as her compeers: Sara Lane of the "Brit" is "a dear old lady"; the future Sir Joseph Lyons, earning £2 a week as manager of the Sussex Conservative Club in the Whitechapel Road, takes young Ada into his pantry and feeds her on cakes and biscuits; Alec Hurley, among others, proposes to her; she quarrels with George Edwardes, and, at the Carlton, Escoffier makes it up between them; she buys one of Leslie Stuart's first songs; Paul Rubens takes her to Romano's on Mafeking Night; Alfred de Rothschild offers to invest her savings.

Miss Reeve has a remarkable talent for re-creating a period, a milieu, and in it, herself. Perhaps because of the renewed enthusiasm with which she has approached so many new ones, no two spheres appear the same merely because of her own axial position in them. There is no pretence that it is the same world from which she brings anecdotes of an "occasion when practically the whole floor of Romano's was petrified"; or stories of Clara Bow; or of India, 1916 ("Another Maharajah whom I met during my visit . . ."); or Australia, 1898; or Al Read's dressing room at the Adelphi . . .

At seventy or eighty the world is no longer at your feet; and we must regret that her work in the cinema is overshadowed by the greater glories of her youth, so that she gives only a few pages to her film career—which began with that remarkable British second-feature of 1935, *Late Extra*, which brought together such disparate talents as Virginia Cherrill, James Mason, Alistair Sim, Donald Wolfitt and Miss Reeve herself. Her views on entertainment matters are forthright, and, from her experience, carry weight: she has been in the top earning class of her profession; yet she says: "No artiste, however good, is intrinsically worth more than £30 a week." Her opinions on the cinema would have been interesting. But failing more of them, it is striking to recognise the humility with which she has put her talents and lifetime of experience to the service of the cinema; and the distinction which each performance has given to the films in which she has appeared.

DAVID ROBINSON.

JEAN COCTEAU, by Margaret Crosland. Illustrated. (Peter Nevill, 15s.)

"I have tried to relate Cocteau's work to his life and experience, and most of all to relate the different aspects of his work to each other," the author writes, and her bibliography of nearly 100 works in *poésie, poésie de roman, poésie de théâtre* (including ballet, music-hall and opera-oratorio), *poésie critique, graphique* and *cinématographique* suggests the complexity of her task. She has one or two illuminating general points to make, but has hardly solved the problem of how to write gracefully about the personal life of an artist still living ("After (Radi-guet's) death Cocteau was inconsolable. He wrote to Valentine Hugo 'I am trying, for Mother's sake, not to die.' He was referred to cruelly in Paris as 'le veuf sur le toit.'"); also, her critical line is a bit thin ("Les Parents Terribles was so 'straight' that it hardly seemed to be a film at all"; *La Machine Infernale* remains a vivid splash of colour on the back-cloth, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that it is a special drop-curtain, painted with red, black and gold, lowered between two scenes of the ballet that is Cocteau's work").

The filmography omits any reference to Cocteau's dialogue for *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, attributes the direction of *Les Enfants Terribles* to its author, and post-dates both *Sang d'un Poète* and *L'Eternel Retour* by a year.

JAMES MORGAN.

Correspondence

Unfair to Griffith?

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—Still they come, these glib (but undocumented) references to "Griffith's decline" (*SIGHT AND SOUND*, January/March). Granted, following the failure of *Intolerance*, Griffith attempted to recoup his losses by a group of pot-boilers which incidentally were not at all without merit. But how can one refer to a "decline" when in the 'twenties he hit back with *Broken Blossoms*, *Way Down East*, *Isn't Life Wonderful?* *Orphans of the Storm*, *The White Rose and America*? I have seen all of these films, some of them many times, over the past two years, and they still impress and stimulate. Perhaps they no longer represent Griffith the innovator—but Griffith the artist is in every frame of them. . . . Griffith certainly did decline in the late 'twenties, though even *Battle of the Sexes* and *Drums of Love* have their considerable moments. And *Abraham Lincoln* from any other director would have been considered a notable achievement. From Griffith, it inevitably suffered by comparison with *The Birth of a Nation*. It is incomprehensible to me why this theory exists that Griffith did nothing of note after *Intolerance*. The declines of Cruze, Brenon, Lang and especially Dupont were much more spectacular, but one never hears them mentioned.

I have been told, incidentally, that Mamoulian had seen *only Birth and Intolerance* of all the Griffith films; certainly his personal knowledge of Griffith's history seems to be somewhat limited if he refers to *Birth* as a 1916 production. . . .

Yours sincerely,

W. K. EVERSON

Manhattan Towers Hotel,
2166 Broadway,
New York City 24, N.Y.

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—Mr. Albert Johnson's "impressions" during his first viewing of *Intolerance* were quite a feat, and perhaps it is a little unfair to pick him up on what no doubt were slips of memory. It is a pity that he could find no opportunity to check the factual accuracy of his account.

Let it be recorded that the young heroine of the "Modern" story is the "Little Dear One," not the "Dear Little One"; Mr. Jenkins, not his sister, cuts the workers' wages by 10 per cent; it is the Boy's father, not the Dear One's, who is killed in the strike; Prosper Latour in the Medieval story is the lover of "Brown Eyes," and has nothing to do with Marguerite de Valois; and finally, it would be nice to see Lillian Gish's name spelt correctly.

I am more disturbed, however, by a kind of disparaging levity in Mr. Johnson's style. After a rather pretentious (in view of what follows) promise to "regard the evidence more carefully than before," we have a wish that Mr. Mamoulian were going to discuss something other than Griffith, and an implication that Mr. Mamoulian's anticipated praise may not be altogether sincere, but may spring from guilt-feelings on the part of Hollywood for the neglect of Griffith in his later years.

One would have thought that Mr. Mamoulian's words were unexceptionable enough, but the writer has to characterise them as "glowing," a term not in use these days without an undertone of disparagement. He next remarks that the introductory music by Beethoven is called "musical score for *Intolerance*." Presumably we are here intended to reflect upon the naiveté of the poor, uncultured Americans, who link Griffith with Beethoven. Mr. Johnson should have seen the finest recent showing of *Intolerance*, at the Everyman Theatre, Hampstead, with a synchronised accompaniment drawn from the music of Beethoven, Purcell, Elgar, Barber, Sibelius, Rawsthorne, Richard Strauss (among others), which fitted the film so remarkably that it was in itself almost a work of genius.*

. . . . In dealing with the middle section of the modern story, Mr. Johnson seems to have been more concerned to make

ingenious verbal play than to draw genuine points from the film. Far from "every friend a potential Fagin," Griffith stresses the genuine friendliness of the "kindly neighbour" with the "friendly glass of beer" for the young wife. It would be unlike Griffith to paint a picture of "pitiless gloom" without showing, and indeed emphasising, positive aspects. Mr. Johnson quite rightly states that the Friendless One epitomises the plight of the lonely country girl in the big city, who through lack of wise guidance falls in with undesirable elements, but can the character really be said to foreshadow the "cinema's misty-eyed approach to the prostitute?" The Friendless One is nowhere given the false glamour of the "prostitute with a heart of gold," who becomes an all too familiar figure later on screens all over the world. In any case, she is not a prostitute.

. . . . The usual charge of outdatedness against Griffith is never made very explicit in its application. I should have thought there had hardly been a time when the message of the film was more apposite. Outdated! when there is a difference of ideological systems sharper than at almost any time in history; when there was never a greater tendency to judge opinions not strictly on their merits, but by standards related to some particular ideological system. And when it has become "bad taste" to state facts or to relate past events if those facts or events do not fit in with the current "climate of opinion."

Lest it should seem that I see no positive merit in Mr. Johnson's article, I should like to express sincere appreciation of his aptly phrased tribute to the Babylonian sequences. It is indeed true that Griffith seems to linger almost lovingly over the final shots, and a moment of history seems to be, as it were, frozen and preserved for us, changeless for all time.

I am engaged on research into the early "Biograph" days, particularly in connection with the careers of Mae Marsh and Robert Harron. It may be that some readers of *SIGHT AND SOUND* may be able to help me in the acquisition of material. . . . Some readers may recall Miss Marsh's visit to this country to make *The Rat and Paddy-the-next-best-thing*, or may have Press cuttings, souvenir programmes, etc. Or some may have seen films which are not available in this country, such as *The White Rose*, *Cinderella Man*, *Polly of the Circus*, or the very early *Judith of Bethulia*. I am looking for any information "off the beaten track," provided only that it is accurate and verifiable.

Yours sincerely,

H. J. DUNHAM.

69 Woodside Gardens,
Tottenham, N.17.

Salt of the Earth

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—*Salt of the Earth* was made by a group of film makers who were motivated by sincerely held principles that are similar to those I was taught in Sunday school, and which I tried to apply practically when a young man campaigning for the Liberal Party. In those days our radicalism occasioned the same hysterical opposition as the label of Communism evokes today and that of Leveller did nearly three hundred years ago. We have still not learned the Liberal principles of tolerance and co-existence, though it seems that you have, judging by your publication of many readable and reasonable replies to Pauline Kael's lengthy statement of her political views in her review of *Salt of the Earth*.

Yours faithfully,

ADRIAN BRUNEL.

First House,
Bulstrode Way,
Gerrards Cross, Bucks.

Documentary

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—A foreigner can be only puzzled that Mr. Lindsay Anderson in his letter ("Straight Questions," *SIGHT AND SOUND*, October/December), should have chosen cattness to counter Mr. John Grierson. The same foreigner, however, has no such innocent reaction to Mr. Anderson's self-satisfied tone when mentioning his own critical achievements, and as it were by natural extension, those of *SIGHT AND SOUND*.

This brings to mind an uncomfortable fact for which Mr. Anderson may or may not feel any responsibility: *SIGHT AND*

*Mr. Johnson, a resident of San Francisco, regrets he was unable to attend the showing of *Intolerance* at the Everyman.—Editor.

SOUND may—until Mr. Grierson, or someone else, refutes it with facts—have done the excellent critical job implied by Mr. Anderson on the kinds of cinema he mentions, but certainly it has done a feeble job on the short film. In fact, one would gather from most issues of SIGHT AND SOUND that films other than features simply did not matter very much. I have found, for instance, few and inadequate articles on documentary during the past two years. The grudging and abortive series "The Sulky Fire" got nowhere, as its negative premise probably made inevitable, and in any case it was very parochial and threw no light on the state of documentary outside Britain.

At this point I might add that, as a Canadian film-maker, I have been dismayed by the lack of mention of Canadian films in SIGHT AND SOUND. This, of course, may be no more than a reflection of your paper's disregard for the short film as such (Canada making practically nothing else). Another possible explanation is that Canada has produced no cinematic masterpieces and that therefore few Canadian films are noted in SIGHT AND SOUND's pages. However, although pre-occupation with masterpieces is pleasant enough, it is hardly what one expects of a critical journal supported by the Senior State of the Commonwealth and dedicated to cinema as a whole, and to no one part of it—no one national part and no one aesthetic part.

No Canadian has been so rash, thus far, to complain about this state of affairs. On the whole, we know our place, which is in the scullery along with all the rest of the shorts and documentary producers (although in imagining this, we may be guilty of self-flattery) and we have been content to be seen without being heard. Before, however, retiring once again to the silence proper to our condition, I would like merely to ask by what natural law SIGHT AND SOUND so consistently inhabits the parlour? Short trips back (and down) to the kitchen and the laundry to see what "they" are up to hardly constitute a working relationship with those humbler parts of the cinema mansion; and if it is not SIGHT AND SOUND's job to have a working relationship with all parts of the cinema—then what is it?

And now for Mr. Anderson's facts: in twelve issues (October/December, 1951 to October/December, 1954) SIGHT AND SOUND published nine pieces concerned with documentary. Three of these were "tributes"—two to deceased geniuses (Flaherty and Jennings), one to a deceased organisation (Crown); two were items in the above-mentioned "Sulky Fire" series; one was on Sucksdorff; one was on *World Without End*; one was on *Conquest of Everest*, and one was on the Shell Film Unit. These articles can hardly be represented as adequate coverage for the non-feature film over a three year period. Furthermore, I have taken the trouble to check issues previous to those just named and the record is, if anything, worse: just one long, merry pæn of praise to the Feature Film, scarcely interrupted by a few polite gestures in the direction of films of other kinds.

Yours sincerely,

GUY GLOVER.

520 St. Patrick Street,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Mr. Glover's letter suggests that all films are either features or documentaries. It is surely an odd definition of categories that would ignore, as evidence of an interest in non-feature production, articles during the period mentioned on the films of James Broughton, on *Children's Films*, on "Memoirs of a Mexican," on "The Living Desert," "Images de la Folie," "Crin Blanc," "Le Grand Méliès," the films on Leonardo da Vinci by Emmer, Fulchignoni and de Potier, and on the U.P.A. cartoons. For the record, the reviews of "World Without End," the long reevaluation of Paul Rotha's "Documentary Film" and the regular Edinburgh Festival reports should also be mentioned.

Twenty years ago documentary gained much attention in SIGHT AND SOUND and other magazines because it was a vital creative movement and its pioneering influence was widely felt. Today it is not in that position; and we are no more obliged to have "a working relationship" with documentary just because it continues to exist than, on the same grounds, with any other kind of film-making. Our policy has never been "institutional" in the sense of covering all aspects of the cinema for the sake of encyclopædic duty. Instead, we try to concentrate on films that seem to us of creative importance. Mr. Glover himself calls SIGHT AND SOUND a "critical" journal, and one

important function of criticism, when dealing with a "living" tradition, is to distinguish those parts which are indeed living from those which are merely existing.—EDITOR.

Wanted—

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—I wish to obtain copies of SIGHT AND SOUND from January, 1949, to May, 1953, and wonder if any reader has a complete set for sale.

Yours faithfully,

ELEANOR VON SCHWEINITZ.

Parbrook Farm,
Near Glastonbury,
Somerset.

—For Sale

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

Sir,—I wish to dispose of my library of books concerning the cinema, consisting of some seventy-five books and various pamphlets and magazines. It covers most aspects of the cinema through the years, and is only badly represented in year books.

I should prefer to see them go in one lot, and would gladly send a list to interested persons who might consider a complete collection, rather than hunting for individual rarities.

Yours faithfully,

JEFFREY TURNER.

Hathaway,
33 Fieldgate Lane,
Kenilworth.

The Big Screens

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,—I read your contributions by Richard Kohler and Walter Lassally in this quarter's SIGHT AND SOUND with great interest. Many fine films of "normal ratio" have been quite spoilt for me in recent months on these hideous "new wide screens"; the most glaring example was *Wages of Fear*, which I saw in a large Odéon Theatre. I imagine that the projectionist was a nervous wreck at the end of the day through the need for constant racking to enable us to read the sub-titles. The faces were just not seen at all in some scenes. I have complained bitterly to a number of Managers who merely agree with me whole-heartedly that the practice is wrong, shrug their shoulders and reply: "This is the advance of science, we cannot go back to the old screen."

I feel that you at the Institute will be doing all true lovers of the cinema a great service if you can arouse at least a modicum of public objection to these screens.

I wish you every success in any moves which you are able to make in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

STUART KEEN.

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With *Born Yesterday* adaptation from the stage had followed the usual course, taking the action out of doors where possible, breaking up lengthy dialogue scenes with movement. The leisurely tempo of *The Actress* (1953) encouraged a rather different approach, and this was an example of the photographed play which never attempts to look like anything else, but which wholly engages the attention through its dialogue and playing. Ruth Gordon's play has affinities with *I Remember Mama* and other reminiscent evocations of the past: it looks back to 1910 or so, to a girl infatuated with the stage, fighting to persuade her parents somehow to raise the fifty dollars that will take her to New York and a career in the theatre. One doesn't know how much of this was derived from Ruth Gordon's own experience (her own stage career, incidentally, began in *Peter Pan* in 1915, and her first screen role was in 1939, in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*), but the characters of the single-minded girl and her irascible, obstinate father, an ex-sailor resentfully reconciled to life ashore, are realised with an affectionate amusement, created in a mood of recollection.

The Actress was a film in which hardly anything, in the dramatic sense, happened, and in which the two main events—the father loses his job, the girl fails at an audition—actually took place off screen. Again, Cukor demonstrated his sure response to the especial values of the material: the mood was gentle and reflective, the period sense exact but unemphatic, the relationships made three-dimensional. It would have been easy enough here to play up the irrelevant detail, to exploit that first encounter with the telephone, for instance, as a deliberate comic turn. In fact, *The Actress* developed a concentration which brought the characters sharply into focus. Jean Simmons played with an endearing earnestness as the girl, Spencer Tracy with superb assurance as the father; but it was the orchestration of the playing, the balancing of humour with sentiment,

of the bravura "big scene" (Tracy's description of his childhood) with the quiet observation of detail (the first introduction to the family) that revealed Cukor's discreet authority as a stylist.

IV

George Cukor, Garson Kanin and Ruth Gordon all came to Hollywood from the theatre, and it is not by chance that they have brought to the cinema essentially what the stage can bring—films in which the emphasis remains for the most part on text and performance, in which the director's "creative" function perhaps extends little beyond that of the expert stage producer, and for which the writer takes the ultimate responsibility. One can't, though, precisely define areas of creative responsibility; if Cukor's function is merely to translate, he performs it, so to speak, with the stylistic certainty of a Scott Moncrieff.

Style, in fact, is what these films have in common; style in playing, in the care and exactitude with which settings are realised, in the civilised temper of the writing. They are all, to a greater or a lesser extent, lightweight pictures. If they are "offbeat"—and in a sense they are—it is because, working within the framework of the big Hollywood studios, these collaborators have avoided the atmosphere of the assembly line, have made, in *The Marrying Kind* and *The Actress*, pictures which cut across the recognised patterns of popular entertainment. "Bespoke tailoring," in other words. It is by no means an isolated achievement, but neither is it a common one. And, although George Cukor claims that he does not particularly enjoy making comedies, that they are likely to prove more difficult and less rewarding than other subjects, one trusts that this article will turn out to be only an interim report on the affairs of one of Hollywood's happiest partnerships.

(THE TROUBLED MAN continued from page 213)

do anything: things happened to him or around him, while he gazed in horror or bewilderment or despair. He was the patient sufferer, the man to whom life is unfair, the middle-aged middle-class Atlas dumbly bearing the weight of the world on his shoulders. Dumbly, I repeat: he was essentially silent. He suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune in the mind. He said nothing, because he had no answers to the complicated questions that life poses; and because he felt things too deeply for words; and because

"Seul le silence est grand; tout le reste est faiblesse."

Who would have wished him to talk? His face was a whole world where warring armies marched and countermarched, where nations were lost and won. In *What A Life!* he had four words of dialogue: "*Fenchurch Street. Four-fifteen.*" This was a mistake: he should simply have pulled the timetable from his pocket, and sighed his heart-rending sigh.

I don't think it is too much to call him a great clown. Like all great clowns, he had a sort of nobility about him. The petty irritations of life saddened him, but never made him petty or irritable. It was not only funny, but also heartening to watch him wading indomitably through a sea of troubles. He was unstoppable: quite capable, you felt, of lumbering up twenty-nine thousand feet to the top of Everest if called upon to do so.

He also had great innocence of spirit. In a world of sophisticates and smart alecks, he still reacted to events and to other people's feelings with a childlike spontaneity. A small pleasure promised, a ray of hope on the horizon, and his great moon face lit up, his eyes shone like headlamps. A tale of woe or a cold egg for breakfast, and his face took on the ineffable sadness of an unloved bloodhound. And like a good child, he was naturally biddable and inclined to virtue. If the Government told him it was his duty to bath in five inches of water or to volunteer for potato-lifting, then by heavens he would do it, even though he knew he was going to hate every minute of it. His not to reason why.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *Moonfleet*, *Philadelphia Story*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Actress*, *Adam's Rib*, *Hit the Deck*.
PARAMOUNT for *The Rose Tattoo*, *The Heiress*, *Come Back, Little Sheba*.
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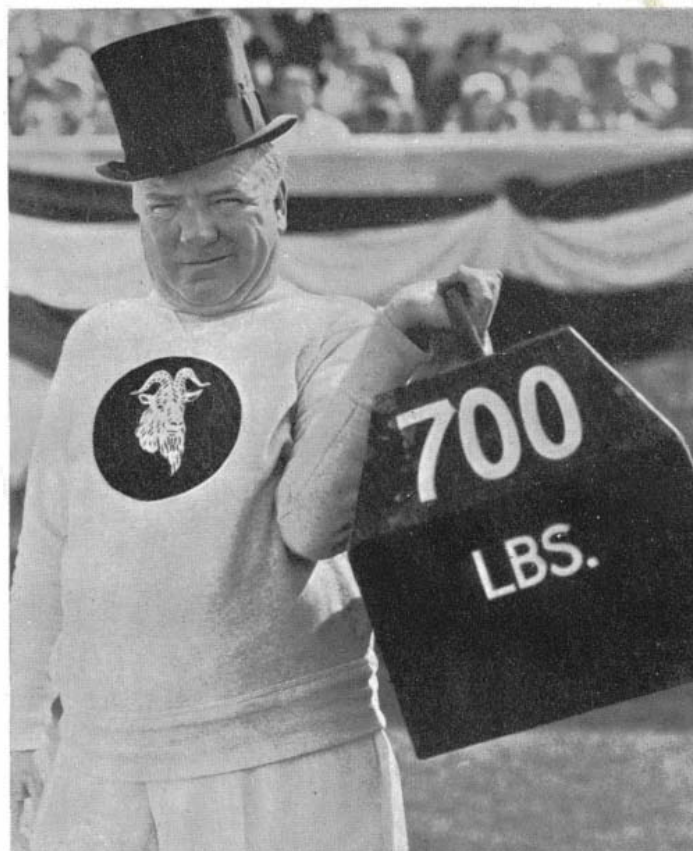
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